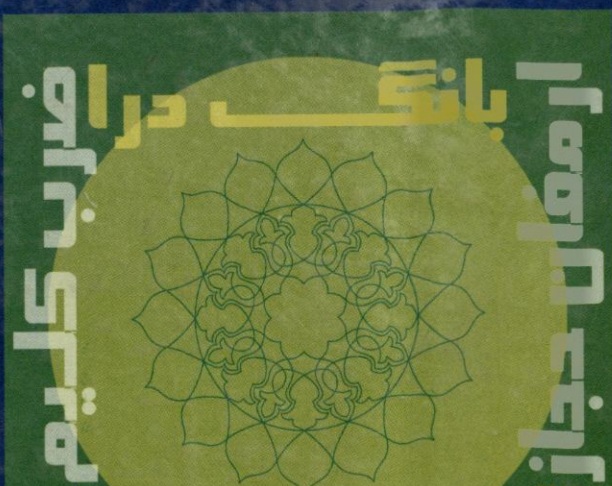
w to Read Iqbal?

ays on Iqbal, Urdu Poetry
&
Literary Theory

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Essays on Iqbal, Urdu Poetry & Literary Theory



Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

Edited and compiled by:
Muhammad Suheyl Umar

HOW TO READ IQBAL?

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IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN

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In Memory
of
Mushfiq Khvaja (1935-2005)
Great friend, fine scholar,
perfect stylist

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Muhammad Suheyl Umar
Director

Part-I

IQBAL STUDIES

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HOW TO READ IQBAL?*

Given a small twist of inflection, the question may very easily be understood to mean: How *can* one read Iqbal? The implication would be that he is such an uninteresting poet, how could one read him by choice? It is true that such a question would not be asked by someone who has the slightest feel for the Urdu language and the rhythms of its poetry. For even the dullest of Iqbal's poems rings and reverberates not just in the outer ear but deep in one's psyche and sets up vibrations of pleasure in one's soul. But the problem arises when one is made to read Iqbal not for pleasure, but for profit. For Iqbal is also a politician's poet, a religious thinker's poet, and a philosopher's poet and much more besides. Iqbal has earned a lot of praise and not a little blame as well, for being one or other of the things mentioned by me above.

It is an interesting, though sad fact of literary criticism that politics seems never to have left poetry to its own devices. Politicians love to make use of poetry, but are wise enough to leave alone poets like Shakespeare and Goethe whom they can't exploit for their own purposes. Literary critics are less wise. They try to read politics in poets like Shakespeare and Keats even who did their best not to profess any political creed and who made their poems apparently incapable of yielding interpretations that could be converted into political currency.

That Iqbal should have aroused interest and even devotion among politicians and political and religious thinkers all over the Muslim world, and particularly in those Muslim countries that were trying to come to terms with the modern age and had been under colonial domination for many long years, is quite

natural. For Iqbal's poetry has strong overtones of modernity and makes serious efforts to find ways of fruitfully negotiating the postcolonial landscape in society and politics without losing what he regarded as fundamental elements of Islamic religious thought and sociopolitical identity. He was also passionately concerned with the historic reality of Islam and how its lost effects could be revived and perpetuated in the modern world. Such a project was bound to appeal to, and have uses for the Muslim politician as well as the Muslim social political reformer and activist.

In the Urdu world, Iqbal was and even now is often known by two appellatives: *sha'ir-e mashriq* (Poet of the East), and *hakimul ummat* (Sage of the [Muslim] People, or, Philosopher of the [Muslim] People.) It might be interesting to note here that the later appellative (*hakimul ummat*) used to be and still is also applied for Maulana Shah Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1863/4-1943) one of the two most influential Sufis and religious reformers and mentors of the Muslim community in South Asia during the first half of the twentieth century. Thanavi was not much interested in politics (though he favoured Jinnah and the Muslim League) but his influence can be seen and felt in the social and religious life of South Asian Muslims even today. Even the political life of Muslims especially in Pakistan, shows Thanavi's influence through the ulema of that country, particularly those of the Deobandi School who have a strong presence in Pakistan today.

A few more points are worth noting here about these appellatives:

Iqbal, the philosopher-activist, political and religious thinker, active in politics though not a full-time politician, was seen by the Muslim community of South Asia as performing an ongoing, meliorist role in the Muslim society of his time which was qualitatively the same role that was being discharged by Ashraf Ali Thanavi, practicing Sufi-intellectual, and religious and social reformer. That is to say, his status as poet notwithstanding, Iqbal had another niche, or many other

niches, in the political life and society of the subcontinent. But what was lost in this assessment was the fact that whatever other status Iqbal enjoyed had been conferred on him because of his status as poet. So any literary consideration of Iqbal could ignore, so far as such a proceeding was possible, the philosophical or political content of his poetry but could not ignore its literary content.

To be sure, both *sha'ir-e mashriq* and *hakimul ummat* are now falling into desuetude, more in India than in Pakistan. That is, literary and even nonexpert circles do not now use these appellatives freely. But the reason for this seems to be Iqbal criticism perhaps believes itself to have grown in sophistication and subtlety, and these appellatives do seem simplistic if not naïve. But a reason for their declining popularity with the common reader could be that he is not all that excited with Iqbal's role as *hakim*, and *mashriq* also has grown now in common perception to mean more than what it did five or six decades ago.

The "East" in *sha'ir-e mashriq* (Poet of the East) was not seen as subsuming anything more than the subcontinent and maybe Afghanistan and Iran. Similarly, the "Poet" here didn't mean something like a "Poet *par excellence*". It rather signified a poet whose poetry presented and represented the political, intellectual and maybe even spiritual aspirations of the "East". Yet, in some sense Iqbal was also seen as the Poet of the Greater East, that is Asia. Perhaps Iqbal also saw himself as the Poet of the East and seemed to see in Goethe the Poet of the West (*sha'ir-e maghrib*), that is, Europe. It was for this latter reason that Iqbal composed *Payam-e Mashriq* (Message From the East, 1923) just as Goethe had sent his greetings to the East (Iran, in this case) through his *West-östlicher Divan* (Divan of the East and West, 1819). Iqbal described his book on its title page as "Response to the German Poet Goethe" and wrote in the Preface: [1]

> The purpose of *Payam-e Mashriq* is... to present before the [people's] eyes those moral, religious and religio-national

truths which relate to the inner education of the individuals and peoples.

Thus Iqbal gave advance intimation of his poetic intention to the reader and desired the poems of *Payam-e Mashriq* to be read principally if not solely as didactic-philosophical documents. This did not help the cause of Iqbal the poet and led the uninitiated student to believe that the poems were something like Sana'i Ghaznavi's *Hadiqah*, which Browne characterized (wrongly, in my opinion) as the dullest poem ever written. Thus the title "Poet of the East" easily flowed into "Sage/Philosopher of the [Muslim] People". It would be wrong to say that Iqbal connived at this result, but it is quite right to say that Iqbal often professed a lack of interest in his poetry *qua* poetry and this encouraged misreadings of his poetry inasmuch as attention was concentrated on Iqbal's philosophical and religio-political message so as to result in a near exclusion by literary critics of his poetic content and practical suppression of his claim to be treated as poet, a claim, one might say that is embedded almost everywhere in his poetry.

The detrimental effects of this suppression on Iqbal the poet can be demonstrated by quoting from two important works of literary criticism on Iqbal, both written from nearly opposing points of view. A period of a little more than four decades separates the two. The following is from Majnun Gorakhpuri (1904-1988), a leading Progressive critic of his time who was also well known for his expertise in Classical Urdu and Persian poetry:[2]

> Iqbal, despite his occasional reactionariness, ancestor-worship, and occasionally taking a turn in the wrong direction, seems to be to be a poet of Life, Revolution and Progress.

Salim Ahmad (1927-1983) whom I hold in the greatest respect and affection was a major modern poet and critic noted as much for erudition as his brilliant wit. He wrote his book on Iqbal with the avowed purpose of rehabilitating the status of

Iqbal as a poet. He summed up Iqbal the poet in the following words: [3]

> The central problem in Iqbal is nor Self-hood (*khudi*), nor love (*'ishq)*, nor Action ('amal), nor yet Power and Dynamism (*quvvat o harakat)*, but rather as opposed to all these, Death is Iqbal's central problem. This is the problem that acquaints his being with a tremor and upheaval that shakes his whole being. Here lies the foundation of that poetic experience which generates the poetic world that is peculiar to Iqbal.

Needless to say, neither critic does justice to Iqbal but the main point is that both critics judge Iqbal in nonliterary terms. Poets of an earlier age are almost always at risk from misreading. This is true particularly in the case of Urdu whose history suffered a major literary cultural discontinuity in the middle of the nineteenth century. Contemporary or near contemporary poets are rarely misread. More often than not they provoke bafflement if not resentment. The great Progressive critic Ehtesham Husain (1912-1972) once described Iqbal as "a baffling figure" because he found unrecocilable differences in the philosophical or political positions taken by Iqbal. But Ehtesham Husain's bafflement is nothing compared to the systematic misreadings of Iqbal that have resulted from his "art" being studied separately, if at all, from his "thought". Majnun Gorakhpuri made no pretence of judging Iqbal on literary merits. He sat in judgment on Iqbal as a fellow dialectician and a politically committed student of life and literature. In the space of the ten or twelve short pages that he devotes to studying western influences on Iqbal, Majnun Gorakhpuri mentions Goethe, Nietzsche, Hegel, Bergson, Wordsworth, Heine, Browning, Emerson, Idealism, Voluntarism, Activism, Leibnitz, Theory of monads, Dialectics, Marx, Life-force, Rudolf Eichen (I couldn't identify him, but Majnun Gorakhpuri describes as "the famous *hakim* (philosopher) of Europe") in that order.

Salim Ahmad has no such pretensions. He is by his declared intention out on a demolition mission. He wants to read Iqbal as poet. He says: [4]

> Ninety per cent of all that has been written about Iqbal so far consists of commentary on and explication of his thought and his theories. Such writings have two fundamental faults: They do not, as a general rule, address Iqbal's poetry. Their other fault is that they present Iqbal's thought as things that are already there, ready to use. This latter point needs a bit of elucidation. Iqbal's thought (if his thought is at all something separate from his poetic personality) is a part of his being....We cannot view his thought as having existence outside his being, and as if Iqbal has used them in the same way as we can use merchandise that we buy in the market.

Apart from the fact that here Salim Ahmad flies dangerously close to T. S. Eliot's false theory of "felt thought" (which I think he repudiated later), the point to be noted is in spite of his good intentions Salim Ahmad can't do more than indulge in flights of impressionistic-phenomenological fancy in trying to tell us why he thinks Iqbal's *Masjid-e Qurtuba* is a great poem: [5]

> Gradually, we find ourselves being submerged in Iqbal's experience....Now it is not Iqbal's thought that we gain acquaintance with: we go down into Iqbal's heart, and in its depths we now experience a vitality of life that we had never felt before. In the depths of our being we become more capable of feeling, more disturbed, more alive. Now the poem's rhythms become the rhythms of our blood. And the poem, percolating down from our head softens and melts our whole being and reverberates even in the soles of our feet.

Well, a little of such writing can go a long way, but we are not nearer to any demonstrable reason why *Masjid-e Qurtuba* is a great poem. If, in determining "death" to be Iqbal's central concern and the reason for his greatness (which he denies is the case with *Masjid-e Qurtuba*), Salim Ahmad was being non-literary, his raptures over *Masjid-e Qurtuba* leave us a little uncomfortable and puzzled for here he is being literary in a superficially belles altruistic and not in any kind of critical mode.

Salim Ahmad is not alone in his failure to tackle Iqbal's greatness as a poet. In a somewhat uncharacteristic access of malice, or pique, or both, Salim Ahmad wrote in the beginning of his book that "most of those who wrote on Iqbal have been persons whom Urdu literature doesn't recognize with much honour or respect."[6] This is not quite true, for Al-e Ahmad Surur (1911-2002) one of the greatest of Urdu critics, wrote extensively about Iqbal and he was mostly concerned with Iqbal the poet. Yet his problem was his inability or unwillingness to make sustained and focused texts of literary criticism. His eclecticism obliged to him to look at all possible aspects of a poem, however briefly. Thus the reader was left with a multiplicity of impressions. One reason for his not casting a searching analytical eye on Iqbal's poetry was that he regarded the notion of Iqbal's high poetic station as a given, as something need not be elaborated too much. This of course was not the case, especially not in the post-1947 world when in the young people's eyes many truths had turned out to be illusions, much gold of science and philosophy had been shown to have been the basest dross, and the sensibility of the "third world" was undergoing a serious change in the face of serious challenges and inroads by the postcolonial cultural and economic imperialism.

At such a time in our history, many of us found it difficult to accept the lofty self-assured tone of Iqbal's political and philosophical voice. It was, after all, the voice of a person who for all his wisdom and sagacity and uncanny ability to predict the moral and cultural decline of the West, hadn't actually seen the second world war, didn't know about the atomic bomb and Hiroshima, couldn't even have conceived of the horrors of tyranny and genocide in Palestine and Afghanistan and Bosnia and Iraq and elsewhere. Thus Iqbal's prophetic voice failed to carry conviction, if taken on its own.

Things might have been different if our literary critics had risen to the occasion and told us that Iqbal was a truly great poet and here are the reasons for his greatness, never mind the

fact that his "message" and his certainties seem slightly dated and his "philosophy" sounds somewhat simplistic. His glory begins with his poetry, even if Iqbal may have occasionally lapsed into denying that he was a poet in the conventional sense.[7] Unfortunately, our literary critics were apparently so overwhelmed by the "Poet-Sage-Philosopher of the East and the [Muslim] People" that they regarded as futile any exercise to examine and establish Iqbal's right to be placed among the poets of the world, and not just the poets of Urdu or Persian.

In a conference on Iqbal organized in New Delhi in 1987, Al-e Ahmad Surur began his short paper with the words:[8]

> The emphasis in Iqbal studies so far has been on his thought. His art has not been given sufficient and proper attention. Iqbal's greatness is not because of his philosophy, or because of the depth and strength of his thoughts, but because of the thought having been moulded into poetry.

But he hedged his bets and wrote in his concluding paragraph as follows:[9]

> Today, when there is greater attention on the breaking and disintegration of beliefs, expression of [the poet's] self, [poetry as] soliloquy, irony, distortion and shattering of language and free form, we should not ignore the Taj Mahal of Art that we find in Iqbal and which proves to us that no exalted purpose injures poetry, provided the content of that purpose comes to us as [integrated] form and whose thought observes and follows the rules of poetryness. Again, in this age of the breaking and disintegration of beliefs, one mustn't forget that the authoritativeness of [the truth of] personality that is the distinguishing mark of true and unalloyed poetry develops through a taste and joy of certainty.

The problem with most Urdu criticism about Iqbal is it fails to appreciate the fact that "great thinker" is not synonymous with "great poet." In fact it may be easier to write poetry in philosophy that to write philosophy in poetry. One recalls Coleridge writing to Wordsworth, "...Whatever in Lucretius is poetry is not philosophical, whatever is philosophical is not

poetry..." He was talking about Wordsworth's *Excursion* which was published in 1814 as a fragment of a larger poem called *The Recluse* about which he went on to say, "I expected the colours, music, imaginative life, and passion of *poetry*, but the matter and arrangement of *philosophy*..."[10]

The philosophical poet's problem thus was of dissolving the one into the other, or of "wedding" truth to verse. Coleridge made an interestng point about the enjoyment of poetry, particularly philosophical poetry when he asked how could a person "fully enjoy Wordsworth who has never meditated on the truths which Wordsworth has wedded to immortal verse?"[11] Although Coleridge didn't explain what he meant here by "truths", or how the "truths" should be "wedded" to verse, his point was that full enjoyment of philosophical poetry is not possible unless one shares the belief-system of the poet, or at least has sufficient empathy with it to enable one to "meditate on the truths set out through that belief-system".

This is an apparent though not real similarity in Coleridge and Surur's positions. Surur seems to imply that Iqbal's *zauq-e yaqin* can be, or in fact should be shared by all his readers. Coleridge is in fact saying something quite opposite: if one cannot meditate upon (is out of empathy with) what Coleridge terms as "truths" one can't enjoy Wordsworth's poetry fully. Surur's position is simplistic, but can be rescued somewhat by postulating that it's possible for all of us to at least respond emotionally to someone else's "taste and joy of certainty". But Asloob Ahmad Ansari, another major critic who is keen to establish Iqbal's position as a great poet, is very nearly naïve in his formulation:[12]

> Iqbal's is great poetry because it has bejewelled artistic embellishment and is moreover the creation of a great mind and consciousness, one which has derived inspiration and benefit from diverse intellectual, philosophical, cultural and political streams of the East and the West and has imbibed into the unity of its inner self the fruits of such derivation and has transformed them from its own standpoint and has stamped the

impress of its personality on them. And over and above this, it [the poetry of Iqbal] distills its light and song from values which are those of a world religion and the civilization based on that religion.

Well, one can only say about such criticism, if criticism it is, that having such friends and advocates, Iqbal's poetry needs no enemies. The case for Iqbal's poetry to have "the colours, music, imaginative life, and passion of *poetry*, but the matter and arrangement of *philosophy*" is at best not proven, and the demand from the reader to accept the claim that a poetry should be termed great because "it distills its light and song" from Islam is like asking him to place all religious and devotional poetry on a rung equally high with Iqbal, or claim a special niche of greatness for Iqbal's poetry and all Islam-inspired poetry to the exclusion of other poetries springing from other faiths. Neither position, it is obvious, can be sustained even for a second. The question of "literary" against other kinds of merit– philosophical, religious, whatever, still remains tantalizingly open.

One might like then to discard Coleridge as too old fashioned and argue for the poetry of belief—any belief, and say that it is belief (something like Surur's *zauq-e yaqin*) which makes great poetry by itself. One need not share that belief, and in fact even "suspend" that belief, as Eliot recommended:[13]

> If you read poetry as poetry, you will "believe" in Dante's theology exactly as you believe in the physical reality of his journey; that is, you suspend both belief and disbelief.

But Eliot's counsel on this matter is not disinterested, and is a dangerous one to boot. He believes that since Dante has a philosophy so every poet as great as Dante should have a philosophy too.[14] Ignoring the glib oversimpilicity of the argument and the vagueness of the terms "philosophy" and "great", one would still want to know which poets are as great as Dante, and what are the means to identify them? Eliot responds with a stunningly nonliterary and loaded answer: The

'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards".

Then, as a gesture of Christian grace, he adds in the same breath: "though we must remember whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards".[15]

Since Eliot has already warned us in his essay on Dante that one "cannot afford to ignore Dante's philosophical and theological beliefs"[16], we know which way his critical wind is blowing. It'll blow no good to Iqbal, and its Christian obscurantist odour should have been strong in the noses of our Professors of literature long ago. As Ezra Pound wrote in his review of Eliot's *After Strange Gods*, "all the implications" of Eliot's ideas about man's "need for more religion" are "such as to lead the reader's mind into a fog."[17]

In *After Strange Gods* Eliot was trying to elucidate a matter that was important to Eliot himself. Peter Ackroyd summarizes Eliot's position in *After Strange Gods* in the following words:[18]

> What he wished to attack was the absence of moral, and therefore religious, criteria in the criticism of contemporary literature. Having at Harvard rebuked the dogmatism of those critics who considered literature (and especially poetry) to be some kind of substitute for religion, he was now reversing the equation he wished to introduce in the appreciation of modern literature those concepts of good and evil which were part of the religious comprehension.

The point that emerges now is that to determine the ideas implied, embedded or stated in a poem as true in a religious, philosophical or scientific sense and therefore acceptable or desirable and to decide that the poem therefore is a good one is actually denial of the true nature and function of poetry. Richards made this clear a long time ago when he said:[19]

> The 'Truth' of *Robinson Crusoe* is the acceptability of things we are told, their acceptability in the interests of the narrative, not their correspondence with any actual facts….It is in this sense that 'Truth' is equivalent to 'internal necessity' or rightness. That is 'true' or 'internally necessary' which

> conforms or accords with the rest of the experience, which cooperates to arouse our ordered response, whether the response of Beauty or another….It is evident that the bulk of poetry consists of statements which only the very foolish would think of attempting to verify. They are not the kind of things which can be verified….But even when they are, on examination, frankly false, this is no defect….And equally, a point more often misunderstood, their truth, when they are true, is no merit.

In Urdu we often talk of the "universality" of poetry's appeal, or of the "universal truths" that poetry deals in. Simplistic as these notions are, they are even more dangerous to a proper literary appreciation of poetry because they tend to be based upon the assumption that a classification of "Truths" exists and lead us to the further assumption that those "Truths" that strike us as "Universal" must be truly so, and that they may even have the force of Science. Thus we have Hamidi Kashmiri, another leading critic and admirer of Iqbal telling us in all seriousness that as opposed to his Western counterparts, Iqbal found himself in confrontation with regional and collective problems like colonialism and backwardness.[20]

> His appreciation and cognition of these, and other human problems created by the industrial society, was on a purely personal, individual level. Thus his poetic being was able to attain a Truth and Universality which remained denied to other Urdu poets of that time.

Hamidi Kashmiri is trying to establish that Iqbal "felt" and not just "thought about" the political and social problems of his times and this is what gives "Universality" to his poetry. Apart from the fact that we are not told how "feeling" not "thinking" a problem confers "Universality" and "Truth" on the end product of the process, we are left with a somewhat uncomfortable feeling that it is the "problems" and the "Truth" of their solutions that the critic wants us to attend to; the poetry will then take care of itself. That's why we find him saying a page later that while making questions of "Nationalism, Patriotism, Sufism or

Philosophy…part and parcel of his thought, Iqbal didn't deal with them in a doctrinally passive way", and that is why he:[21]

> [D]escribed philosophy as being 'distant from life', made Hegel and Bergson targets of his critique, in Sufism he approved of *wahdatu'sh shahud* (Unity of Manifestation) instead of *wahdatu'l wajud* (Unity of Being)…and as regards Politics, he granted the critical importance of the Individual in the shaping of the collective systems and censured Democracy.

The other problem with this kind of thinking is that it treats the poet's philosophical or ratiocinative thinking as scientific, and therefore reliable and even true. We know now that even scientific truths are tentative. None after Karl Popper can think different. But there is a greater problem, as Richards realized, and as Coleridge dimly understood more than a century before. Science cannot be reduced to impulses or emotions while poetry is mainly a matter of impulses and emotions:[22]

> The essential point, however, is that Science is autonomous. The impulses developed in it are modified only by one another, with a view to the greatest possible completeness or systematization…..So far as any body of references is undistorted it belongs to science….And just as there are innumerable human activities which require undistorted references if they are to be satisfied, so there are other innumerable human activities not less important which equally require distorted references or, more plainly, *fictions*.

Poetry, of course, is fictive in character, and the poet is the maker of fictions. This was known to Qudama Ibn Ja'far seven centuries before Shakespeare and nearly a thousand years before Richards.[23] It is only in our time, and with great but uncomfortable making poets like Iqbal that such questions are raised. Denying the fictive character of poetry enables us to impose our own notions of truth and falsehoods on poetry. As Richards astutely noted, even poets are not immune from this temptation. With his characteristic gentle irony Richards says:[24]

> Many attitudes...can be momentarily encouraged by suitable beliefs held as scientific beliefs are held....When the attitude is important, the temptation to base it upon some reference which is treated as scientific truth is very great, and the poet easily comes to invite destruction of his work; Wordsworth puts forward his Pantheism, and other people doctrines of Inspiration, Ideals, and Revelation.

I won't say that Asloob Ahmad Ansari or Salim Ahmad didn't read these words, but I wish they had remembered them while writing about Iqbal. And I suspect that even Iqbal fell into the temptation in some of his poems. But it was up to us, the literary critics, to read him and love him for his fictions rather than his lectures.

As we saw above, Eliot said that it is perfectly possible to believe in Dante's theology if we read poetry as poetry. Richards had made this point five years earlier, and better. For the question is not whether Dante's theology is believable: the question rather is whether Dante's poetry is believable. And a cognate question is whether it is at all necessary to believe, or even accept Dante's theology before we can "fully enjoy" Dante's work. Eliot was unwilling to shed the baggage of what he thought was Christian belief, so he answered in the negative. Yet both the history and theory of reading poetry belies Eliot. Richards made this point in his *Practical Criticism* in the following words:[25]

> For it would seem evident that poetry which has built upon firm and definite beliefs about the world, *The Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost*, or Donne's *Divine Poems*, or Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, or Hardy's *The Dynasts*, must appear differently to readers who do and readers who do not hold similar beliefs. Yet in fact most readers, and nearly all good readers, are very little disturbed by even a direct opposition between their own beliefs and the beliefs of the poet.

Such being the case, there seems hardly any need to be exercised about "proving" or not proving the statements made in a poem. As Richards pointed out, "disputable statements so

constantly presented to us in poetry, are merely *assumptions* introduced for poetic purposes."[26] Richards went on to say:[27]

> It is better to say that the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well. If unfortunately it does arise, either through the poet's fault or our own, we have for the moment ceased to be reading poetry and have become astronomers, or theologians, or moralists, persons engaged in quite a different type of activity.

But it is a sad fact of the human condition that even literary critics expect poets to perform like circus artists on the trapeze of meaning. Sartre once described Baudelaire's greatest failure to have been his attempt to achieve and establish a personal though false concept of good and evil. "Baudelaire submitted to Good in order to violate it."[28] Somebody made a very good reply to this by saying that Sartre forgot that Baudelaire was a poet, and thus had a right to a spurious philosophy. Sartre's displeasure was because Baudelaire consciously drove himself into a dead end, leaving no retreat open. And yet Auerbach held that "Souls such as Baudelaire are the *aimes choisies* [chosen souls] of our time or of a time that is not too far in the past."[29] And in fact Lionel Johnson gave an even better, because literary, reply long before Sartre came out with his indictment. Johnson said that "Baudelaire sings sermons".[30]

It is understandable for European literary critics to lapse into questions of (philosophical, scientific or doctrinal) Truth in poetry because Plato gave a permanent bad conscience to European poets and writers. George Steiner says, regrettably adopting a somewhat patronizing tone about Aristotle that the only point where the classic view of poetry and drama touched on the nature of language was:[31]

> ...in the conflict between the Platonic theory of *mimesis* and the Aristotelian model of *katharsis*. The Platonic notion of the capacity of language, particularly when joined to music to elicit imitative action, his insight into the possibility that verbal fictions weaken or corrupt our grasp on what Freud was to call 'the reality principle', his attempt to distinguish

negatively verifiable and poetic truths—all these raise linguistic issues of final importance. Aristotle's rejoinder is based on a far less penetrating sense of language and inclines to a cursory identification of form with explicit content.

Yet the issue is hardly linguistic: it in fact relates to the performatics of language where our presence at a performance of poetry somehow enables us to participate, or at least be in some present at the scene being narrated or the occasion being described. This may be pernicious from Plato's point of view, but it only goes to confer a sort of autonomy on poetry as regards questions of 'Truth' or 'The reality principle.' The Arab theorists were quite correct in demanding that poems have words, rhyme, metre, and meaning. Whether the meaning was 'true' in any particular sense was not the concern of poetry per se. What constituted 'word', 'rhyme' and 'metre' was the concern of the everyday language user and the poet. We Urdu critics who should have found interpretive and explicatory tools for Iqbal from our own Arabo-Persian-Sanskrit traditions fell into the error of accepting Plato's hegemonic role in the formulation of our modern theories of literary appreciation and interpretation. The loss has been ours.

2

So how should one go about reading Iqbal? One thing, which our Ancients knew all the time but we have of late tended to forget, is that thanks to literary tradition, all poetry represents a kind of historical continuity:[32]

> Every writer writes within a tradition or complex of traditions and hews the wood of his or her experience in terms conformable to the traditionally provided matrices thereof....Literature is identifiable by this conformity of the individual work to the canon, which determines what will or can count as literature at any given time, place and cultural condition.

Salim Ahmad made a brilliantly perceptive remark about Nazir Akbarabadi (1740-1830), when he said that the "lack of a

large tradition of *nazm* writing let one of our great men go waste."[33] Iqbal was placed better, because he had, among others, Bedil (1644-1720) in Persian and Mir Anis (1802-1874) in Urdu.

The mention of Mir Anis may surprise some of us until we realize it that Mir Anis's marsiyas[34] are the best premodern model in Urdu of narrative-historical, narrative-lyrical, and oral-dramatic poetry and Iqbal's poetry extends and exploits the possibilities created by Anis. More importantly in the context of our modern anxieties about poetry's doctrinal or philosophical Truth, Mir Anis provides the perfect example by the very great value placed on his poetry in the entire literary community. For Mir Anis's original impulses arose from Shi'i beliefs and a generally Shi'ite view of History. Yet the majority of his poetry's lovers have been non-Shi'i, and the first major and still current critical articulation about Mir Anis was *Mavazina-e Anis o Dabir* (1907) written by Shibli No'mani, a staunch Sunni historian, critic, poet, and much else besides. It was Shibli, and not some Shi'i divine who said that "the poetic qualities and merits of Anis are not matched by any other poet."[35]

I myself come from a strict family of Deobandis and had nothing in my background or environment to prepare me for the protocols of mourning and tragic lamentation that the *marsiya* abounds in. In fact, I still do not find myself fully empathetic to the "weeping verses" which are an integral part of all *marsiya*. It was my father, no great admirer of the Shi'i school of Islam, who introduced me to Shibli's book when I was very young, and I was able immediately to relate to it, and to the poetry of Mir Anis. I may not weep, but I can spend days in raptures at the beauty of verses like the following:[36]

The refulgence, the awful splendour, the prime elegance,
The majestic lustre...
Moons of the House of Zahra,
And the Suns for all Times;
And suddenly something dark descended upon the world.

The sun had not yet receded but they
Went into decline.

These are just four lines, and by no means the best of their mode in Mir Anis, not to speak of his whole vast oeuvre. I am aware of the inadequacy of my translation, yet I feel I have conveyed some of the *frisson* of the majestic first two *misras* (hemistiches) descending into the dark vale of shock and sorrow of the last two.

Iqbal was aware of his legacy from Mir Anis, as his Urdu poems from all periods of his poetic activity amply demonstrate. But I bring up Mir Anis here with a different purpose. If, in spite of a cultural or even religious cleavage Mir Anis the poet can remain valid for his myriad readers, should we not believe that Iqbal, undoubtedly the greater poet, can be understood and enjoyed in his own right?

What does, then, Iqbal the poet give to his reader? In the first place, Iqbal lets me have full or partial entry into five extremely powerful poetic traditions: the Arabo-Persian, the Indo-Persian, the European, the Indo-Sanskrit, and the Urdu. The first one is evident everywhere in his longer and shorter poems like *Khizr-e Rah, Zauq o Shauq, Masjid-e Qurtuba,* the ghazals of *Zabur-e 'Ajam,* the longish poem *Hudi* in *Payam-e Mashriq* and in much else besides. The Indo-Persian tradition speaks everywhere in the numbered pieces of *Bal-Jibril*, the long poem in that collection in imitation of Sana'i, the numerous poems of intellectual and emotional probing like *Mihrab Gul Afghan ke Afkar, Lala-e Sahra, Jibril o Iblis,* and of course in the two masnavis, *Asrar-e Khudi* and *Rumuz-e Bekhudi* where Bedil speaks in many disguised voices. These latter also partake of the Indo-Sanskrit tradition, and their speculative tone occasionally recalls Swami Bhupat Rai Begham Bairagi's (d. 1719) long masnavi sometimes described as *Qisas-e Fuqara-e Hind*. The poem clearly mixes Rumi's thought and Vedantic thought, and its discursive techniques too, especially in the dialogue mode, anticipate Iqbal.[37]

If the ghazals of *Payam-e Mashriq* are in the Indo-Persian mode, its nazms like *Tanha'i, Shabnam, Hur o Sha'ir*, and the general tone of the whole collection recalls Western ways of poem making and even poem thinking. The long poem *Sham' o Sha'ir* is a triumph of the use of the Western soliloquizing, monologic mode in the Indo-Persian style. Bedil seems to be much in evidence here again.

Iqbal's derivations from the Urdu tradition go back not just to Dagh, but also, and very much more considerably to Mir Anis, and Ghalib, then Zauq and Sauda. It is not often realized that Iqbal would have made a very great qasida poet and would easily have rivalled Zauq and Sauda had he lived in premodern times.

Let me speak here a bit more of Iqbal's allegiance to the European and Indo-Sanskrit poetic traditions. It must be obvious that all the dramatic poems, and all the dialogue poems could not but owe their existence the German Romantics and to a certain extent to Goethe in terms of general technique and in any case even the conception of writing dramatic poems is Western, not Indian or Eastern. There does exist a favourite dialogue device in classical Persian masnavis, and occasionally in ghazal too. It is actually a rhetorical device called *saval o javab* (Question Answer) where the poet frames questions in one misra and gives the reply in the second. The form is highly stylized and very often the poet seems to first frame the answer and the: invent a suitable question for it. Whereas in Iqbal, the dialogue, even a very short one like *Subh-e Chaman* in *Zarb-e Kalim*, middle length ones like *Muhavira-e Ilm o Ishq* and *Muhavira Mabain-e Khuda va Insan* which recalls the influence of George Herbert in the reverse, or longer ones like *Pir o Murid* in *Bal-e Jibril*, or the truly longer dialogues in *Javed Namah* are proper dialogues and vehicles for exchange of subtle ideas. They have hardly any parallels in the nonwestern traditions of poetry.

Then we have poems like *Iblis ki Majlis-e Shura* in *Armughan-e Hijaz*, where the epic imagination seems at work

in the Western manner even if briefly. *Ek Arzu,* and *Rukhsat Ay Bazm-e Jahan* and some other early poems of *Bang-e Dara,* remind one of he early English Romantics while the hortatory and celebratory poems like *manind-e saba khez vazidan digar amoz* in *Zabur-e Ajam,* and the short poem *Rumi Badle Shami Badle...* in *Zarb-e Kalim* remind us of Shelley's passionate appeals to the Irish peasants. The *Javed Nama,* of course is a incredible masterpiece in terms of the fusion of Western and Eastern, especially Ibn-e Arabi and Dante.

Perhaps it is yet more important to observe that the fusion is not so much on the level of borrowing of ideas or intellectual approaches as on the level of creative patterning. *Javed Nama* bears the same relation to Dante and Ibn-e Arabi as the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore bears to the Jama Masjid of Delhi, or the Sher Dar Madrasa at Samarqand, built at almost the same time (1630's), while the Sher Dar Madrasa itself recalls Mahmud Gavan's Madrasa in Bidar built in the far South of India in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Humayun's tomb in Delhi bears the same resonances as Hoshang Shah's tomb in Mandu in central India, built a century earlier around 1450. It is not so much a question of imitation as of kindred spirits making their appearance in an inspired series of flights of creativity.

The astonishing variety of Western modes and techniques, including experiments in metre and form is rivalled by the numerous Western subjects, persons, ideas, places, and political situations that crowd Iqbal's poetry and give it the feel and air of a Western metropolis. The sheer imaginative reach and the wide range of the creative imagination are truly unparalleled in modern world poetry anywhere. The existence of such poems in such large numbers shows that Iqbal was fully comfortable through the vast cultural and literary hinterland of Europe.

When I talk of the Indo-Sanskrit stream of poetic tradition also enriching Iqbal's poetry, I do not merely mean the marvellous translation of the *Gayatri Mantra*, in *Bang-e Dara,*

or the little gem from Bhatrihari in *Bal-e Jibril*, nor yet the presence of Vishvamitra and Bhartrihari in *Javed Nama.* I do not even refer to the fact, important in itself, that Iqbal intended to translate the whole of *Ramayana* and also the *Gita* into Urdu.[38] Nor do I refer specifically to poems in *Bang-e Dara* like *Ram*, and *Swami Ram Tirath.* To my mind Iqbal's most remarkable debt to the Sanskrit literary tradition is in his knack for peopling his poetry with natural or cosmic objects, the sun, the stars, the moon, the morning, the night, the sunrise, the flower, birds, the dewdrop, the mountain, the ocean, God himself, and treat them as characters in a semi-secret play whose scenes and significance are known only to himself. This imaginative device is apparent in even the earliest poems like *Insan aur Bazm-e Qudrat, Chand aur Tare, rat aur Sha'ir, Bazm-e Anjum, Sair- Falak,* the opening stanzas of *Javab-e Shikva* in *Bang-e Dara* and finds absolutely perfect expression in *Bang-e Dara* itself in the short poem called *Insan.* In later collections we have *Lala-e Sahra, Ruh-e Arzi Adam ka Istiqbal Karti Hai, Mulla aur Bihisht* in for instance *Bal-e Jibril,* and many others. The first few pages of *Payam-e Mashriq* yield poems of bewildering imaginative power in this strain, like *Gul-e Nakhustin, Taskhir-e Fitrat, Bu-e Gul, Sarud-e Anjum.*

It is difficult to find such plenitude, such abundance of both cosmic and non-human on the one hand and earthly and human on the other within the space of any poetic tradition other than Sanskrit. A look at the first few pages of a short Anthology gives us the following (from the Vedas): *Ushas: The Dawn, To Night, To Varuna, For Parajnaya: Bearer of Rain, Aranyani: Forest Spirit, Two Birds, A Tree in Flashing Heaven;* (from secular verse): *Nightfall, Moonrise, Speed, Young Tree, Flower,* and so on.[39] The reason for this treatment of the human and the non-human as one is not obscure or esoteric at all. As the editors inform us in their Introduction, there are many strands of unity that form the fabric of Hindu literary and philosophic thought. One of them is:

> ...A world-view which does not allow for a dichotomy between matter and spirit, man and nature. In this holistic view all life is one, and inner and external reality are mutually dependent. This world-view is held by all the languages of India...

Further on, we learn that Indian thought assumes a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, a perpetual identification of things create and uncreate with Being and Becoming.[40]

> 'Yonder world is in the likeness of this world as this one is the likeness of that', says the *Aitreya Brahmana*. ...Man in Indian literature is operating simultaneously on two planes, one situated in time and space and the other transcending both....According to Abhinava Gupta, the most significant exponent of the Indian aesthetic, Being is neither merely an atemporal visualisation of itself, nor an absolute separation from time and space.

It should be obvious that in spite of Iqbal's great interest in the philosophy of Time and Being, what is relevant here to his student is the question of poetic technique, of how Iqbal is able to draw upon strands of Indo-Sanskrit thought where in Abhinava Gupta's words, Being is neither atemporal nor an absolute separation from time and space. Yet a question might be asked if Iqbal's interest in the Muslim philosophical questions of Time would not by itself have led him to a point where the route might have become open for him to create a poetic world in which the cosmic and the non-cosmic, the earthly human and non-human, all could become characters in his poems?

There are two answers to this: first, there is no other literary tradition on the immediate horizon of Iqbal's literary world in which the human and the non-human world meet and interpenetrate all the time. The other answer is provided by Coomaraswamy who suggests the existence of a similarity if not correspondence here among the traditions of the East. He says, "There are very few metaphysical doctrines in Islam that could not, if one made the attempt, be very plausibly derived

from Vedic or Buddhist sources." Coomaraswamy quotes Meister Eckhart as saying, "God is creating the world now, this instant" and comments that this "might have been said by any Sufi". Doubtless, Coomaraswamy is more interested in the philosophical content rather than what he calls "the literary history of ideas" but what he says here is sufficient for the literary students of Iqbal.[41] Quoting from the *Athirveda*, Coomaraswamy says that Time is not a "duration", but rather the "Timeless" to which "all movable time is ever present". Coomaraswamy goes on:[42]

> It is in these terms that the *Maitri Upanishad* distinguishes the "two forms" (*dve rupa*) of Brahman, i. e., aspects of the "two natures" (*dvaitibhava*) of the single essence (*tad ekam*)....There are, indeed, two forms of Brahma; time, and the Timeless.

Coomaraswamy concludes his discussion of the Sufi concept of Time with these words:[43]

> Time, in other words, is an imitation of eternity, as becoming is of being and thinking is of knowing.

Given such sources for the imagination, Iqbal's creativity was bound to take the course that it did. It is not relevant to the literary critic to ask whether Iqbal actually believed these things. It is even less relevant for the literary critic to himself share his or anyone else's beliefs about Time and Being. All we need to assert is Iqbal's poetry gives us imaginative *entrée* into more worlds of literary and creative tradition than any other poetry of the twentieth century.

In addition to the general grace, power and elegance that Iqbal' poetry derived from his full use of the resources of the Indo-Persian tradition, Iqbal's remarkable intertextuality and plurivalence owe their power, and maybe even their existence to the Indo-Persian poetic tradition. It must be remembered that the main Arabo-Persian literary thought and praxis of which Iqbal was the indirect but able inheritor did not have much to say about what Todorov has described as the "overflowing of

the signifier by the signified." This he defines as the signifier of a single proposition leading us to "knowledge of two signifieds, one direct and the other indirect".[44] Todorov identifies three kinds of discourse; literal, ambiguous and transparent[45], and brings support for this classification by invoking Abhinavagupta through K. Kunjunni Raja:[46]

> Abhinavagupta says that when an expression gives its own literal meaning, and in addition suggests some other sense, we cannot regard both these distinct senses as conveyed by the same power. The former proceeds directly from the words, while the latter comes from this literal sense. *Tatparya* pertains to the expressed sense, whereas *dhvani* pertains to non-expressive factors also…

That is to say, the poet is able to invest new or unexpected meanings to the literal meaning and can construct meaning on two levels between which there may not be any direct discernible relationship and what is "literal" may not be so literal after all. This insight came into the Indo-Persian tradition through interactions between Sanskrit and Persian in India and through the Indian Style (*sabk-i hindi*) Persian poets and is otherwise not to be found in mainline Arabic or Persian literary theory.

The quest of intertextuality is different, for intertextuality, in the sense of making poems from poems has been an established poetic practice in the Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu classical traditions. By the time of Iqbal the principle and practice both fell into disrepute, or were at least looked at with discomfort and suspicion because the poet was now mostly seen as "doing his own thing" unbeholden to others. Iqbal here again demonstrated the creative and evocative power of poetry when images, themes, and poems of the past are made to serve as the foundation for other images, themes, or poems. With its wealth of allusion, its direct and indirect echoes of other poets, and its wide background studded with poems and poets of the past Iqbal's poetry feels like a panorama of Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Sanskrit, German and English poets of the past. And

there is never any doubt as to who is in control: the presiding genius is Iqbal and none else. He manipulates, uses, abandons, re-embraces, refashions, approaches from unexpected angles. This is not merely learned poetry. This is poetry whose wardrobe of jewels is like the "metaphor of the mind" described by Abdul Qahir Jurjani as a metaphor whose meaning is inexhaustible.

In *Tulu'-e Islam* (1922) Iqbal has a verse:[47]

The Reality of all things—whether of fire or earth, is the same
Slash the particle's heart, the sun's blood will come dripping forth.

Iqbal went back to this stunning image through a different perspective thirteen years later in a short poem in *Zarb-e Kalim:*[48]

Should a maestro of the art so desire,
The grace and plenitude of Art will make
The light drip from the sun's body
Like dew.

I don't want to go into the "message content" of these verses. I want merely to point out that the images actually go back to the Indo-Persian poet Faizi (1547-1594) through another Indo-Persian poet Talib Amuli (d.1626). Let's hear Talib Amuli first:[49]

زاں چهره گل به دامن اندیشه می کنم
خورشید می فشارم و در شیشه می کنم
I gather the flowers of her face in the skirt of my thought,
I squeeze the sun and pour it in my glass.

Now listen to this from Faizi:[50]

چون نور ازل بردل جاوید فرو ریزد
گر ذره بیفشاری خورشید فرو ریزد
Where Eternity's light falls ever
On the heart:
Squeeze a particle and the sun
Will drip forth from it.

be entirely clear. But he had a curious theory for this. He wrote:[55]

> The lack of clarity in his [Momin's] (1800-1852) style viewed in the light of psychology appears as an important but painful proof of the decline of the Muslims' urge to rule. It only among the people who are the ruling power that clarity of expression is essential. This state of lack of clarity which is so common with Momin is also found in a somewhat lesser degree in minds far deeper than Momin's, for instance, Ghalib and Bedil.... [Here] ambiguity becomes a source of enjoyment and inadequacy of expression is savoured as depth of thought.

The import of the above two utterances can be fully appreciated only when we read them side by side with this interesting critique of Bedil and others offered by Iqbal:[56]

> Ghalib wouldn't probably have understood Bedil's thought. All [Ghalib's] admiration and praise of Bedil is just because of Bedil's [extraordinary-beautiful] Persian compounds [*tarkib*], and that's it. Ghalib learnt [the art of] *tarkib* from Bedil. I myself have benefited from Mirza Bedil in this matter.

So Iqbal as *hakimul ummat* may have wanted his prescription for his people to be unambiguous but Iqbal the poet was like Baudelaire, quarrying the poems and texts of others for making his own images. Iqbal had no shame in admitting that he made use of Bedil's dazzling linguistic and metaphoric constructions as building blocks for his own texts. Peter Quennell said of Baudelaire, he was industrious and workmanlike, recording on little pieces of paper his "linguistic discoveries", storing them in a tea chest "against the moment when they should be embodied in a poem." Iqbal the poet seems to have been little different in his love of words.

It was not for nothing that Iqbal chose one of Bedil's more obscure verses to explicate and unfold in a delightful little poem, thus establishing the supreme relevance of Bedil's imagination forever in his own poetry. The poem occurs in *Zarb-e Kalim* (1935), a collection of Urdu poems whose central

importance for Iqbal's literary criticism has not yet been fully recognized:[57]

Mirza Bedil

Is this the Reality, or the mischief wrought by my false-seeing eye?
The earth, the wilderness, the mountain range, the dark-blue sky,
Some say: It is; others, it is not,
Who knows if this your world exists at all.
How well Mirza Bedil unknotted this knot
Whose unravelling has been so hard for the Philosopher:
"If the heart had enough space, this garden were sightless:
The wine's hue poured out, the wine-flask didn't have enough room."

So this is how Iqbal the poet gives us entry into our literary traditions, creatively, challengingly, and recuperatively. Take care of the poetry, he seems to say, and the philosophy will take care of itself. More than any modern Urdu poet it is Iqbal who makes us respect and try to understand the foundations of our poetics. The structures of meaning that Iqbal makes for us exist in their own right and also as continuities.

A question might be asked: So what about Iqbal's originality? Should not a poet have an "individual voice", a "style of his own"? The first answer to this is that a great deal of truly great poetry passes beyond petty considerations of "individuality" and "style." All of us know about Omar Khayyam's "individuality" and all of us also know that out of the several hundred rubais that pass as Omar Khayyam, there are only about a handful that can with some certainty be ascribed to Omar Khayyam. We know that some of the most famous and well-loved shi'rs and even whole ghazals in the Divan of Hafiz have now been shown to be not from Hafiz though they reflect Hafiz's true "individuality" and "style." We know that scores of ghazals of Sauda's (1706-1781) contemporaries somehow found their way into Sauda's mss. collections and continued to be quoted and studied as part of

Sauda's work for two centuries and more. So questions of "individual style" are essentially contextual, not absolute.

That is not to say that Iqbal has no style of his own. One way of putting the matter would be that he has many styles, he has different styles for different occasions. The style of *Shkiva* and *Javab-e Shikva* is different from that of *Zauq o Shauq* whose style is again very different from that of the ghazals and ghazal like poems in *Zabur-e 'Ajam*. Then there is the grand Iqbalian manner, especially apparent in the Urdu, but not so prominent or differentiated in the Persian. These matters can't be decided with a few strokes of bureaucratic pens. Nor can we understand them by counting the so-called patterns of sounds, labial, or dental, or fricative, or liquid, or whatever that scribal critics pretend to have discovered in Iqbal. To believe that the existence of poetry could be accounted for by counting vowels and consonants is to believe that patterns of vowels and consonants do not exist elsewhere in the language. In fact, they would seem to occur more richly in film songs.

Iqbal should be seen as a perfector of different styles in Urdu poetry, and as the inventor of many new ones, for instance, the dramatic dialogue, the verse style that is suited to speech rhythms, the narrative of the imagined landscapes of the mind. Similarly his nature poems range from formal stylized narratives that recall the qasidas of Iranian Mirza Habib Qa'ani (1807-1853) to interior monologue-like poems that seems to take us back to Wordsworth.

All modes, all manners of poem making are within Iqbal's practical range: the celebratory, the narrative, the lyrical, the dramatic, the hortatory, the speculative, the ironical, the satirical, the comic, the tender, everything melts in his hand and takes whatever shape he wants to give it. Nothing is a stranger here: the intensely introspective, the highly metaphorical, the plain, or the prophetic, all tones are present in their appropriate place. Iqbal's poetry teaches us to recognize the most distant horizons of Urdu poetry as our own.

Majnun Gorakhpuri said something perceptive about the music of Iqbal, and I think he was the first to say that even the most difficult of Iqbal's shi'rs can be sung on the subtlest and most delicate of musical instruments.[58] He didn't say this in precise or subtle enough words, but the point, sadly so often lost in the welter of words generated by us about Iqbal's "truth" and "message", was a valuable one. Iqbal wrote some of the world's most mellifluous poetry and that's a quality that takes its place right there where the highest poetry is. In fact it is to be doubted if there ever can be great poetry without the quality that Amir Khusrau called *ravani* ("flowingness").

"Flowingness" has been a quality about which it is impossible to frame theoretical statements, yet it is clear that some poem or poets have more of this and some have less of it. More important, the question of *ravani* ("flowingness") has engaged the attention of many theorists in the Arab-Persian-Urdu tradition since Khusrau. Even before Khusrau, the Arabs seem to have devoted some attention to the matter as an important aspect of literary appreciation. Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said) quotes from Al–Farabi's discussion of the musical quality or the "beauty of sound" in poetry. Among other elements, al–Farabi identified "purity: where there is nothing in the melody to spoil it qualitatively or quantitatively; ...suppleness and delicacy in long-drawn-out melodies", and above all, the harmonization of vowelled letters.[59] This doesn't take us very far, for Al-Farabi was speaking as a musicologist, but Al-Jahiz had a somewhat more penetrating observation as a literary critic:[60]

> The letters of the words and the verses of the poem should seem harmonious and smooth, supple and easy...gentle and pleasant, flexibly ordered, light on the tongue, *so that the entire verse is like one word, and one word is like a single letter*.

This is very much better, though still quite far from a precise, prescriptive description. Khusrau had much more to say on *ravani*[61] and by early eighteenth century in Delhi, *ravani* had become

accepted as the prime quality of prime poetry. Miscellaneous attempts to find the principle or principles where *ravani* may be located have been made with little success. The fact however remains that for instance, the poetry of Mir and that of Mir Anis is recognized to have more flowingness than any of the premodern poets. Similarly, Iqbal should have been placed at the very highest pinnacle of *ravani* had we found time to read his poems as literature and not philosophical dissertations or politico-religious manifestos whose truth, real or imagined contradictions and falsehoods disputatiously analyzed, confirmed, or rejected.

In the delight that he took and gave in the sheer music of poetry Iqbal reminds me of Mir who is the only Urdu poet whose *ravani* is equal to that of Iqbal, and of Coleridge who among all great critics placed the greatest positive value on the music of poetry. Hartley Nelson Coleridge remarks in his edition of Coleridge's *Table Talk* that Coleridge had "an eye, almost exclusively, for the ideal or universal in painting and music: But his demand from music was "either thought or feeling; mere addresses to the sensual ear" didn't appeal to him.[62] The exact meaning of words like "universal", "thought", or "feeling" must differ from person to person, nonetheless, the general principle enunciated here is entirely sound for it makes an attempt to relate sound with sense which Richards also attempted to do a century later. Coleridge spoke of "the music of nobler thoughts"[63] and thus in a way glossed the terms "thought or feeling" used by Hartley Nelson Coleridge: there can be noble music only where there are noble thoughts. This is insufficient for it denies the property of music to satirical or hate poetry which Coleridge would not have granted the rank of "noble". We need therefore to rethink the matter a bit.

It is Coleridge again who provides the clue by informing us that:[64]

> But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of the imagination; and this together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or

feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt.

This implies or postulates a number of fundamental values of the nature of the music of poetry. The power to sense musical delight is complimentary to the power of producing it among others. Musical delight in a poem is obtainable only when the imagination is at work. The musical delight doesn't function in a vacuum, it has to emanate from a thought, or feeling which itself has the power to pull together a number of disparate feelings or experiences.

This does not fully explain the nearly autonomous nature of the music of poetry, or *ravani*, though later in his discussion of metre Coleridge throws in another valuable insight in his typical off hand manner when he says,[65]

> As the elements of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself must be accompanied by the natural language of excitement.

Walter Jackson Bate has an extremely interesting annotation here from Coleridge himself who wrote to Southey on July 13, 1802 as follows: "...*Metre itself* implies a *passion*, i. e., both in the Poet's mind, & is expected in that of the Reader..."[66]

At one place in *Zabur-e Ajam* Iqbal seems to be echoing or recalling Coleridge in some way when he characterizes poetry or the music of poetry as "lifeless" without "meaning", the term "meaning" here would seem to signify something like Coleridge's "nobler thoughts" or "predominant thought or feeling." Characteristically, Iqbal also brings in Rumi who among the Persian poets had perhaps the most to say about "meaning" (*ma'ni*) in the sense of "Reality". We read the following verses toward the end of *Zabur-e 'Ajam*:[67]

> *I do not know where ma'ni's origins are,*
> *Its form is apparent and familiar to me*
> *Though; The song that has no meaning is*
> *Dead, its words are from a fire that's ashen.*
> *The Master of Rum revealed the secret of meaning;*

My thought bends its forehead at his doorstep. "Meaning
Is that which takes you away from yourself,
Leaves you in no want for the form. Meaning is not
That which renders you blind or deaf, or makes
Man even more in love with the form."

In his dialogue with Bhartrihari in *Javed Nama* Iqbal makes the Sanskrit poet and linguistic philosopher describe the poet's music or mode of existence to be "the crescendo and diminuendo of sound". Other than this, "none in the world know where the poet is."[68] I think there can be no more fitting conclusion to our effort to understand the secret of Iqbal's music than to leave the matter here with Iqbal's prayer at the beginning of *Zabur-e 'Ajam*:[69]

Make my clod of dirt blaze with the light
Of David's song,
To every particle of my being give
Fire's feathers and wings.

If there ever was a poet's prayer answered, it was this.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Thanks are due to my friend Muhammad Suheyl Umar, Director, Iqbal Academy, Pakistan, Lahore without whose urgings this paper would not have seen the light of the day. **(Author's Note)**

* (Paper presented at the Iqbal Academy, Pakistan, Lahore: May 1, 2004)

[1] *Payam-e Mashriq*, 5th printing, Lahore, 1944, page *kaf* (=11).

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[2] Majnun Gorakhpuri, *Iqbal, Ijmali Tabsira,* Gorakhpur, n. d. (circa 1946), p. 106. Capitals added by me, Urdu has no capital letters but the three words here seemed to cry out for capitalization at least in English.
[3] Salim Ahmad, *Iqbal, Ek Sha'ir,* Lahore, 1978, p. 28. The capitalization here is again mine.
[4] Salim Ahmad, *Iqbal, Ek Sha'ir,* p. 19.
[5] Salim Ahmad, *Iqbal, Ek Sha'ir,* p. 105.
[6] Salim Ahmad, *Iqbal, Ek Sha'ir,* p. 18.
[7] In a letter dated January 3, 1919, Iqbal wrote to Syed Shaukat Husain, "Poetryness in my poems has but a secondary place. I don't at all have aspirations to be counted among the poets of this age." In a letter dated March 16, 1919, Iqbal wrote to Maulana Girami, "It's a wonder that people regard me a poet and press me to say my poems to them, although I have nothing to do with poetry." On 3 April of the same year he wrote to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, "The aim of this poetry composition [of mine] is neither poetry [as literature] nor [the pleasure of] language." See Syed Muzaffar Husain Barani, Ed., *Kulliyat-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, Vol. II, Delhi, The Urdu Academy, 1991, pp. 43, 67, 78. The letter to Syed Shaukat Husain was in English. I don't have the English original before me and have translated back from the Urdu version in Barani's book. Another translation exists in Shaikh Ataullah, M. A., Ed., *Iqbal Namah, Majmu'a-e Makatib-e Iqbal,* Vol. II, Lahore, 1951, p. 254. In this translation, the word translated by me as "poetryness" is *shi'riyat*, while the Barani text has *sha'iri* which strictly means "poetry" but can be translated as "poetryness", given the proper context. Anyway, there are other instances where Iqbal clearly implies that he is a serious poet in his own right.
[8] Al-e Ahmad Surur, "Khizr-e Rah, Ek Mutali'a" in Gopi Chand Narang, Ed., *Iqbal ka Fan*, Delhi, Educational Publishing House, 1983, p. 34.
[9] Al-e Ahmad Surur, "Khizr-e Rah, Ek Mutali'a" in Gopi Chand Narang, Ed., *Iqbal ka Fan*, Delhi, Educational Publishing House, 1983, p. 43. The phrase "t̄ te and joy of certainty " is my translation for *zauq-e yaqin*. Surur is alluding to a she'r in Iqbal's poem *Tulu'-e Islam* (The Dawning of Islam, 1922) printed in his first collection *Bang-e Dara* (The Clarion, 1924):

> *Neither weapon nor stratagem works in slavehood.*
> *Shackles are disjointed.*
> *When the taste and joy of certainty develops.*

See *Kulliyat-e Iqbal, Urdu,* Aligarh, 1975, p. 271.
[10] Coleridge to Wordsworth, letter dated May 30, 1815. See *Coleridge: Poetry and Prose,* selected with an Introduction and Notes by Kathleen Raine, Penguin Books, 1957, p. 130. Italics Coleridge's.
[11] S. T. Coleridge, *Table Talk and Omniana*, d., T. Ashe, London, George Bell & Sons, 1896, p. 407.

[12] Asloob Ahmad Ansari, *Iqbal ki Muntakhab Nazmen aur Ghazlen (Tanqidi Mutal'ia)*, New Delhi, Ghalib Academy, 1994, p. 3

[13] T. S. Eliot, in "Dante", *Selected Essays,* London, 1956, p. 258.

[14] T. S. Eliot, in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca", *Selected Essays,* London, 1956, p. 135.

[15] T. S. Eliot, in "Religion and Literature", *Selected Essays,* London, 1956, p. 388.

[16] T. S. Eliot, in "Dante", *Selected Essays,* London, 1956, p. 257.

[17] Ezra Pound, in *The New English Weekly,* March, 1934, quoted in Peter Ackroyd, *T. S Eliot*, London, 1989, p. 220.

[18] Peter Ackroyd, p. 200.

[19] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* London, 1961 [1924], pp. 269, 272.

[20] Hamidi Kashmiri, *Harf-e Raz: Iqbal ka Mutal'ia*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 17.

[21] Hamidi Kashmiri, *Harf-e Raz: Iqbal ka Mutal'ia*, pp. 19-20.

[22] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* London, 1961 [1924], p. 266. Italics in the original.

[23] The original sentence of Qudama is *ahsanu al-sh'ir-i akzabuhu,* translated b S. A. Bonebakker as, "The best poetry is the most lying." It is quite probable that this formulation is original to Qudama and owes little to Greek thought. See S. A. Bonebakker, *The Kitab Naqd Al-Shi'r of Qudama b. Ga'far Al-Katib Al-Baghdadi,* Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1956, pp. 19, 36-37. I am grateful to Professor Nisar Ahmad Faruqi for making this text available to me. As for Shakespeare, see *As You Like It*, III, 3, 13-16:

Audrey: I do not know what poetical is. Is it honest in
deed and word? Is it a true thing?
Touchstone: No, truly, for the truest poetry is the most Feigning,
...

[24] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* London, 1961 [1924], pp. 274-275. Capitalization in the original.

[25] I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism, A Study of Literary Judgment,* London, 1966 [1929], p. 271.

[26] *Practical Criticism, A Study of Literary Judgment,* p. 272. Italics in the original.

[27] *Practical Criticism, A Study of Literary Judgment,* p. 277.

[28] Quoted by Francis Scarfe, *Baudelaire, Introduced and Edited with Plain Prose Translations,* Penguin Books, 1972, p. xv.

[29] Erich Auerbach, "The Aesthetic Dignity of The *Fleurs du mal*" in Henri Peyre, Ed., *Baudelaire, A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, p. 164.

[30] Quoted by Francis Scarfe, *Baudelaire, Introduced and Edited with Plain Prose Translations,* Penguin Books, 1972, p. xiv.

[31] George Steiner, *Extraterritorial, Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution,* Penguin Books, 1975, p. 139.
[32] Hayden White, reviewing Frank Kermode's *An Appetite for Poetry* (1989) in the London Review of Books, October 11, 1990.
[33] Salim Ahmad, "Chiragh le ke Kahan Samne Hava ke Chale" in *Naya Daur,* Karachi, reprinted in the quarterly *Jamia,* New Delhi, Vol. 100, number 7-12, Special issue on Mir Anis, p. 464.
[34] I use the term here in its strict, formal sense to mean "poems written about the travails and ultimate martyrdom of Imam Husain, the Prophet's maternal grandson, and his companions in the battle at Karbala on 10 Muharram, 61 A. H. [=10 October 680]."
[35] Shibli No'mani, *Mavazina-e Anis o Dabir,* Allahabad, 1957 [1907], p. 2.
[36] Mir Anis, marsiya, "kya ghazian-e fauj-e khuda kam kar ga'i" in Masud Hasan Rizvi Adib, Ed., *Ruh-e Anis,* Lucknow 1968 [1931], p. 136.
[37] For details about Swami Bhupat Rai Begham, see Dr. Syed Abdullah, *Adabbiyat-e Farsi men Hindu'on ka Hissa,* New Delhi, 1992 [1943], pp. 313-349.
[38] S. M. H. Burney, Ed., *Kulliyat-e Makatib-e Iqbal,* Vol. II, Delhi, 1991. See Iqbal's letter to Maharaja Sir Kishan Parshad Shad, dated April 25, 1919, and another letter to the Maharaja dated October 11, 1921, regarding his intention to translate the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagwat Gita* into Urdu, pp. 86 and 282.
[39] Sachchidananda Vatsyayan and Vidya Niwas Misra, Ed., *The Indian Poetic Tradition, An Anthology of Poetry from the Vedic Period to the Seventeenth Century,* Agra, 1983.
[40] Sachchidananda Vatsyayan and Vidya Niwas Misra, pp. 13-14, 31; also see p. 33.
[41] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 66. Compare Meister Eckhart's words with the Iqbal's famous shi'r:

The universe perhaps is unfinished yet,
For all the time a Voice is heard:
"Be!" and there it is, becoming.

(Shi'r 7 in item number 3 [second series, after item 16] in *Bal-e Jibril*)
[42] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 8.
[43] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity,* New Delhi, 1990, p. 70.
[44] Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation,* Tr., Catherine Porter, Ithaca, 1986 [1982], p. 40.
[45] Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation,* Tr., Catherine Porter, Ithaca, 1986 [1982], p.53.
[46] K. Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning,* Madras, 1977 [1963], pp. 301-302.
[47] Included in *Bang-e Dara* (1924).

[48] Poem number 5 in *Mihrab Gul Afghan ke Afkar* included in *Zarb-e Kalim* (1935).

[49] Ali Riza Zakavati Qarakzlu, Ed., *Guzida Ash'ar-i Sabk-I-Hindi,* (Anthology of Poetry of the Indian Style), Tehran, 1372 (=1993), p. 136.

[50] Ali Riza Zakavati Qarakzlu, Ed., *Guzida Ash'ar-i Sabk-iHindi,* (Anthology of Poetry of the Indian Style), Tehran, 1372 (=1993), p. 70.

[51] Frances W. Pritchett in her *Nets of Awareness, Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, Berkeley, 1994, has examined question relating to Urdu in some detail. Also see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-i hindi*" in N. H. Jafri, Ed., New Delhi, forthcoming, and *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, no. 14, Ed., M. U. Memon, University of Wisconsin-Madison, forthcoming.

[52] Urfi Shirazi, *Divan-i Ghazaliyat*, ed., Waliul Haq Ansari, Patna, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, 2000, p. 232.

[53] Ghani Kashmiri, *Divan,* Ed., Ali Javad Zaidi and Muhammad Amin Darab Kashmiri, Srinagar, 1964, p. 227.

[54] Iqbal's letter to Muhammad Ikram, in Syed Muzaffar Husain Barani, Ed., *Kulliyat-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, Vol. IV, Delhi, The Urdu Academy, 1998, p. 462. There is a clear typo here in the printed text. I have corrected it.

[55] Iqbal's letter to Zia Ahmad Badauni, in Syed Muzaffar Husain Barani, Ed., *Kulliyat-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, Vol. IV, Delhi, The Urdu Academy, 1993, p. 664.

[56] Iqbal's letter to Chaudhri Muhammad Husain, in Syed Muzaffar Husain Barani, Ed., *Kulliyat-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, Vol. III, Delhi, The Urdu Academy, 1993, p. 976.

[57] The poem occurs in the section of *Zarb-e Kalim* entitled "Adabbiyat, Funun-e Latifa". The shi'r translated in quotes is from Bedil. See Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, ed. Akbar Behdarvand and Parvez Abbasi Dakani, Tehran, Ilham, 1376(=1997), p. 112. Bedil's text as quoted by Iqbal in the poem is slightly different in word order from the Iranian edition cited by me, but the difference is entirely inconsequential.

[58] Majnun Gorakhpuri, *Iqbal, Ijmali Tabsira,* Gorakhpur, n. d. (circa 1946), p. 88.

[59] Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Trs. Catherine Cobham, Austin, 1990, pp. 28-29.

[60] Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Trs. Catherine Cobham, Austin, 1990, p. 29. Italics added.

[61] See Amir Khusrau's Preface to his *Kulliyat*, Kanpur, 1916, pp. 2-5. Also see, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary History and Culture*, OUP, 2000, pp. 81-105.

[62] H. N. Coleridge, Ed., *Specimens of the Table Talk of S. T. Coleridge,* London, 1852, p. 267.

[63] Coleridge, in *Friend*, no. 16, dated December 7, 1809, cited by Walter Jackson Bate, in the Princeton University Press edition of *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. II, 1984, p. 46.
[64] S. T. Coleridge, Princeton University Press edition of *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. II, Ed. Walter Jackson Bate, 1984, p. 20.
[65] S. T. Coleridge, Princeton University Press edition of *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. II, Ed. Walter Jackson Bate, 1984, p. 65.
[66] *Biographia Literaria*. Vol. II, Ed. Walter Jackson Bate, 1984, p. 65. Italics, contraction, and capitalization Coleridge's.
[67] *Zabur-e 'Ajam,* in *Kulliyat-e Iqbal-e Farsi*, Lahore, 1973, pp. 576-577.
[68] *Javed Nama,* in *Kulliyat-e Iqbal-e Farsi*, Lahore, 1973, p. 758.
[69] *Zabur-e 'Ajam,* in *Kulliyat-e Iqbal-e Farsi*, Lahore, 1973, p. 396.

★★★

All translations from Urdu and Persian have been made by the author. Originals of Urdu and Persian texts are given in the Appendix below.

Appendix

"پیام مشرق"...... کا مدعا زیادہ تر ان اخلاقی، مذہبی اورملی حقائق کو پیش نظر لانا ہے جن کا تعلق افراد و اقوام کی باطنی تربیت سے ہے۔

★★★

اقبال اپنی کبھی کبھی کی رجعت، اسلاف پرستی اور بعض اوقات غلط سمتوں کی طرف مڑجانے کے باوجود مجھے زندگی، انقلاب اور ترقی کے شاعر معلوم ہوتے ہیں۔

★★★

اقبال کا مرکزی مسئلہ نہ خودی ہے، نہ عشق، نہ عمل، نہ قوت و حرکت، بلکہ ان سب کے برعکس موت ہے...... یہ وہ مسئلہ ہے جو ان کے وجود کو اس زلزلے سے دوچار کرتا ہے جس سے ان کا پورا وجود متحرک ہوجاتا ہے۔ یہی اس شعری تجربے کی بنیاد ہے جس سے اقبال کی مخصوص کائنات شعری پیدا ہوتی ہے۔

★★★

اقبال پر اب تک جو کچھ لکھا گیا ہے اس کا نوے فی صد حصہ اقبال کے خیالات اور نظریات کی تشریحات پر مشتمل ہے۔ ان تحریروں میں دو بنیادی نقائص پائے جاتے ہیں: پہلا نقص یہ کہ یہ تحریریں عموماً اقبال کی شاعری کو زیر بحث نہیں لاتی ہیں۔ دوسرا نقص یہ کہ ان میں اقبال کے نظریات و خیالات کو بنی بنائی چیزوں کی طرح پیش کیا جاتا ہے۔ یہ دوسری بات ذرا تشریح طلب ہے۔ اقبال کے خیالات (اگر یہ خیالات ان کی شاعرانہ شخصیت سے الگ کوئی چیز ہیں بھی) تو اقبال کے وجود کا حصہ ہیں...... ہم ان خیالات کو اس طرح نہیں دیکھ سکتے جیسے یہ اقبال سے الگ وجود رکھتے ہوں اور انہیں اقبال نے اس طرح استعمال کر لیا ہو، جس طرح ہم بازار سے خریدی ہوئی بنی بنائی چیزوں کو استعمال کرتے ہیں۔

★★★

آہستہ آہستہ ہم اقبال کے تجربے میں ڈوب جاتے ہیں--- اب ہم اقبال کے خیالات سے واقف نہیں ہوتے، اب ہم اقبال کے دل میں اتر جاتے ہیں اور اس کی گہرائیوں میں ہمیں ایک ایسی زندگی محسوس ہونے لگتی ہے جو اس سے پہلے ہم نے محسوس نہیں کی تھی۔ ہم اپنے وجود میں زیادہ حساس، زیادہ مضطرب، زیادہ زندہ ہوجاتے ہیں۔ اب نظم کا آہنگ ہمارے لہو کا آہنگ بن جاتا ہے اور نظم ہمارے سر سے نیچے اتر کر ہمارے پورے وجود کو پگھلاتی ہوئی ہمارے تلوؤں میں گونجنے لگتی ہے۔

★★★

اقبال پر لکھنے والے زیادہ تر لوگ ایسے رہے ہیں جنھیں اردو ادب کچھ زیادہ عزت اور وقعت کے ساتھ نہیں پہچانتا ہے۔

★★★

میرے کلام میں شاعری محض ایک ثانوی حیثیت رکھتی ہے۔ مجھے قطعا یہ خواہش نہیں کہ دور حاضر کے شعرا میں میرا بھی شمار ہو۔

★★★

تعجب ہے کہ لوگ مجھے شاعر سمجھ کر مجھ سے شعر کی فرمائش کرتے ہیں حالانکہ مجھے شاعری سے کچھ سروکار نہیں۔

★★★

مقصود اس شعر گوئی کا نہ شاعری ہے نہ زبان۔

★★★

اقبال کے مطالعے میں اب تک زیادہ زور ان کی فکر پر دیا گیا ہے، ان کے فن پر قرار واقعی توجہ نہیں کی گئی۔ اقبال کی عظمت ان کے فلسفے، افکار کی گیرائی اور گہرائی کی وجہ سے نہیں، فکر کے شعر بننے یا فلسفے کے شعر میں ڈھلنے کی وجہ سے ہے۔

★★★

آج جب عقیدے کی شکست، اظہار ذات، خود کلامی، ہجوملیح (Irony)، زبان کی شکست و ریخت، آزاد فارم پر زیادہ توجہ ہے، ہمیں فن کے اس تاج محل کو نظر انداز نہ کرنا چاہیے جو اقبال کے یہاں ملتا ہے اور جس نے یہ ثابت کر دیا ہے کہ کوئی بلند پایہ مقصد شعریت کو مجروح نہیں کرتا بشرطیکہ اس کا مواد فارم بن کر آئے اور اس کی فکر میں شعریت کے آداب برتے گئے ہوں۔ پھر عقیدے کی شکست کے دور میں یہ بھی نہیں بھولنا چاہیئے کہ شخصیت میں استناد جو کھری شاعری کی پہچان ہے، کسی ذوق یقیں سے آتا ہے۔

★★★

غلامی میں نہ کام آتی ہیں شمشیریں نہ تدبیریں
جو ہو ذوق یقیں پیدا تو کٹ جاتی ہیں زنجیریں

★★★

اقبال کی شاعری بڑی اس لیے ہے کہ وہ اپنی فنی ترصیع و تزئین پر مستزاد ایک بڑے ذہن اور شعور کی پیداوار ہے جس نے مشرق و مغرب کے مختلف علمی، فکری، ثقافتی اور سیاسی میلانات اور تحریکوں سے اکتساب فیض کرکے ان کے ثمرات کو اپنے باطن کی وحدت میں سمو لیا ہے اور ان کی تقلیب اپنے نقطہ نظر سے کرکے اس پر اپنی شخصیت کا نقش مرتسم کر دیا ہے۔ مزید برآں، ان کے اس نور و نغمے کی کشید ان اقدار سے کی گئی ہے جو ایک عالمگیر مذہب اور اس پر مبنی تہذیب کی اقدار ہیں۔

★★★

انھوں نے ایک وسیع تر تناظر میں۔۔۔ مشینی تہذیب کے پیدا کردہ مسائل کا ادراک خالصتا ذاتی سطح پر کیا۔ اس طرح ان کا شاعرانہ وجود ایک ایسی سچائی اور آفاقیت حاصل کرنے میں کامیاب ہوا جس سے اس عہد کے اردو شعرا۔۔۔محروم رہے۔

★★★

انھوں نے وطنیت ہو یا ملیت، تصوف ہو یا فلسفہ، کسی بھی شعبۂ فکر کو اپنی ذات سے ماورا ہوکر نہ دیکھا۔۔ ان کو جزوفکر بناتے ہوئے انفعالی یا عقیدت مندانہ رویے کو روا نہیں رکھا۔۔ انھوں نے 'ہے فلسفہ زندگی سے دوری' کہا اور ہیگل اور برگساں کو تنقید کا نشانہ بنایا۔ اسی طرح، تصوف وحدت الوجود کے نظریے کے بجائے وحدت الشہود کے نظریے کو قبول کیا۔۔۔ جہاں تک سیاست کا تعلق ہے، اس میں انھوں نے اجتماعی نظام کی تشکیل نو کے لیے انفرادی قوت کو تسلیم کیا اور جمہوریت کو ہدف ملامت بنایا۔

★★★

اردو شاعری میں نظم نگاری کی بڑی روایت کی عدم موجودگی نے ایک بڑا آدمی ضائع کر دیا۔

★★★

ان [میرانیس] کے کلام میں شاعری کے جس قدر اوصاف پائے جاتے ہیں، اور کسی کے کلام میں نہیں پائے جاتے۔

★★★

وہ نور وہ جلال وہ رونق وہ آب و تاب
زہرا کے گھر کے چاند زمانے کے آفتاب
بس یک بیک جہاں میں اندھیرا سا چھا گیا
دن بھی ڈھلا نہ تھا کہ زوال ان پہ آ گیا

★★★

میرا ارادہ *رامائن* کو اردو میں لکھنے کا ہے۔

★★★

زمانے نے مساعدت کی تو *گیتا* کا اردو ترجمہ کرنے کا قصد ہے۔

★★★

یہ کائنات ابھی ناتمام ہے شاید
کہ آرہی ہے دما دم صد اے کن فیکوں

★★★

حقیقت ایک ہے ہر شے کی خاکی ہو کہ نوری ہو
لہو خورشید کا ٹپکے اگر ذرے کا دل چیریں

★★★

وہ صاحب فن چاہے تو فن کی برکت سے
ٹپکے بدن مہر سے شبنم کی طرح ضو

★★★

زاں چہرہ گل بہ دامن اندیشہ می کنم
خورشید می فشارم و در شیشہ می کنم

★★★

چوں نور ازل بردل جاوید فرو ریزد
گر ذرہ بیفشاری خورشید فرو ریزد

★★★

کیں ملک غریب است کس از مردم ما نیست

★★★

بے فہم اگر چشم بدوزد بکتاب
نتواند دید روے معنی در خواب
کے غور کنند در سخن بے مغزاں
غواصی بحر نیست مقدورحباب

★★★

غالب نے بیدل کے طرز کی نقالی ضرور کی لیکن بیدل کے معانی سے اس کا دامن تہی رہا۔ بیدل فکر کے لحاظ سے اپنے ہم عصروں سے آگے تھا۔ اس امر کے ثبوت میں شہادت پیش کی جاسکتی ہے کہ ہند اور بیرون ہند کے معاصرین اور دیگر دلدادگان نظم فارسی بیدل کے نظریہ حیات کو سمجھنے سے قاصر رہے ہیں۔

★★★

ان [مومن] کے انداز بیان میں وضاحت کی کمی ہندوستانی مسلمانوں کے انحطاط پذیر جذبۂ حکمرانی کا ایک اہم لیکن اذیت ناک ثبوت بھی ہے۔ صرف حاکم قوم میں اظہار کی وضاحت ایک لازمی امر ہے۔ یہ کیفیت، یعنی وضاحت کی کمی جو مومن کے یہاں اس قدر عام ہے، کسی قدر کمی کے ساتھ مومن سے کہیں زیادہ عمیق ذہنوں میں بھی نظر آتی ہے (جیسے غالب اور بیدل)۔۔۔ ابہام سے لطف اندوز ہوتے ہیں اور تشنہ بیانی کو گہرائی سمجھ کر مزہ لیتے ہیں۔

★★★

بیدل کا فلسفہ، غالب غالبا نہ سمجھا ہوگا۔ محض ترکیب کے لیے سب مدح و ثنا ہے اور بس۔ غالب نے ترکیب ان سے سیکھی ہے۔ میں نے خود مرزا بیدل سے اس بارے میں استفادہ کیا ہے۔

★★★

مرزا بیدل

ہے حقیقت یا مری چشمِ غلط بیں کا فساد
یہ زمیں، یہ دشت، یہ کہسار، یہ چرخ کبود
کوئی کہتا ہے نہیں ہے کوئی کہتا ہے کہ ہے
کیا خبر ہے یا نہیں ہے تیری دنیا کا وجود
میرزا بیدل نے کس خوبی سے کھولی یہ گرہ
اہلِ حکمت پر بہت مشکل رہی جس کی کشود
"دل اگر می داشت وسعت بے نشاں بود ایں چمن
رنگ مے بیروں نشست از بسکہ مینا تنگ بود"

★★★

اقبال کا ایک مصرع ایسا نہیں ہوتا جو نازک سے نازک ساز پر گایا نہ جا سکتا ہو۔

★★★

اصل معنی را ندانم از کجاست صورتش پیدا و باما آشناست

نغمہ گر معنی ندارد مردہ ایست سوز او آتش افسردہ ایست

راز معنی مرشد رومی کشود فکر من بر آستانش درسجود

"معنی آں باشد کہ بستا ند ترا بے نیاز از نقش گرداند ترا

معنی آں نبود کہ کورو کر کند مرد را برنقش عاشق تر کند"

کس نداند در جہاں شاعر کجاست پردۂ او ازبم و زیرنو است

★★★

کس نداند در جہاں شاعر کجاست
پردۂ او از بم و زیر نواست

★★★

خاکم به نور نغمۂ داؤد برفروز
ہر ذرۂ مرا پروبال شرر بده

★★★

Is Iqbal, the Poet, Relevant to Us Today?

The answer to this question could be "Yes", or "No", or "Partly", depending on what image of Iqbal one has in one's mind and also, of course, what sort of person one is. When I say this, I do not have in mind any special theory of identity, nothing of the sort that Russell had in mind when he said that the King, in asking whether Scott was the author of *Waverly*, was in fact asking whether Scott was Scott. It is however, curious that the Iqbal who is talked about and discussed by one critic is so different from the Iqbal who appears in another critic's writings that one is inclined to wonder if they are talking about the same poet. Now there is nothing bad (and in fact everything good) in a poet being approached and interpreted in as many legitimate ways as possible; the fact that a poet's work admits of many interpretations is a sure indication of his being a good poet. The problem arises when one set of persons believes that a certain poet is good, while another would have nothing to do with him. Another problem that arises generally, and especially in reference to Iqbal is that the reasons that one set of persons, or one critic, adduces to support the view that a poet is good, are not found by another group sufficient or even valid to prove that the poet in question is good. In fact, it often happens that the reasons somebody offers to show that a certain poet is good, are considered by some others as proof enough to show that the poet is no good. As I said just now, these two states of affairs have prevailed more in Iqbal criticism (and the view of Iqbal that people have) than in any other criticism. The nearest parallel would be Fani, about whom some people used to rave and grow ecstatic

because he was such a "sad" and "pathetic" poet, and some would turn up their noses in near disgust precisely because he was so "sad" and full of "pathos". Even serious critics found it hard to steer clear of this dualism. One is not sure that the famous title conferred on him (*yāsiyāt kā imām* = the chief priest of the cult or theory of hopelessness) was respectful, or derisive, or both.

The case of Iqbal is even worse. Here are some typical examples:

(A) Iqbal speaks to the Muslims and exhorts them to action and awakening. He is therefore a great poet.

(B) He is therefore not a great, or even a good poet. In fact, his adulators seem to revere him more as a rabble rouser than a serious man with a message.

(A) Iqbal has a message for all mankind. So he is a great poet.

(B) No, messages to mankind do not necessarily make a great poet. And what do we need a message anyway?

(A) Iqbal gave the message of peace and equality among men. Therefore he was a great poet.

(B) No, his was not really a message of peace, but of one superman dominating the rest of mankind. He was, indeed, a reactionary. And even if he did give a message of peace etc., let him be awarded some prize as a great statesman, why insist that he was a poet?

(A) Iqbal wanted Man to be perfect, to be master of his own destiny. So he was a great poet.

(B) No, he in fact advocated a supreme egoism, he was an enemy of the masses.

(A) Iqbal was a revolutionary, he championed the cause of the wretched and the downtrodden, and taught them self-respect and self assertion. Therefore he was a great poet.

(B) No, this only means that he was an enemy of the individual and believed in the blind power of mass hysteria.

(A) Iqbal was a great critic of the West and wanted the East, especially the Muslims, to regain world leadership. He wanted a morally ordered world, against the materialistically ordered world of the West. So he was a great poet.

(B) No, such things do not make a poet; they only make a social reformer.

(A) Iqbal talks in universal tones, he is not fettered by local or individual considerations. He has the impersonality that marks a great poet.

(B) Not at all; this only means that he cared little for human relationships. His poetry, if it is, poetry, is sterile moralizing. He does not respond to individual human suffering; he has no heart.

One could go on like this. The most interesting aspect of this state of Iqbal criticism is that while some of the adverse opinions have been stated explicitly (and sometimes modified or even given up later due to change in fashion or owing to political expediency) most, if not all, can be deduced from the writings of the Iqbal worshippers themselves. In their zeal to praise him for what they think is the essence of his philosophy or theology, they often say contradictory things or gloss over the contradictions which are everywhere in Iqbal, and more prominent in Iqbal than in almost any other poet of his type. I mean, a poet who used ideas more often than everyday human experience as the basis and the source of his poetry.

Another interesting point is that the canonization of Iqbal (I almost said deification, when I thought of Pakistan) has been going on in Urdu criticism with relentless pressure. His admirers have brought every possible argument (or at least mentioned every possible thing) from ontology to the occult, from theology to thermodynamics in support of their belief.

This has left a vast but mute majority of readers gasping. It always needed great courage to find fault with Iqbal; but now it needs three separate kinds of courage to do so: the courage of conviction, moral courage and (in Pakistan) physical courage. The conviction of the best of us would be shaken to see yards and yards of Iqbal criticism, with every inch packed with the names of all metaphysicians from Plato to T. H. Huxley, all theological philosophers from Thomas Aquinas to Shah Valiullah, all Sufi thinkers from Ibn 'Arabi to Ashraf 'Ali Thānavī, all political scientists from Aristotle to Marx. Not many of us would remain undaunted in the face of the onslaught on your ears and eyes carried on day in and day out by the adulators of Iqbal. And none in Pakistan (and not many in India) would risk the very real danger to life and limb that an adverse criticism of Iqbal would entail.

But there can be no doubt that the mute majority exists, shaken by the noise and bewildered by its lack of response to Iqbal, its failure to find in Iqbal someone with whom they could come to terms on a human level. Scores of people have told me, and quite a few poets and critics and serious students of poetry among them, that Iqbal leaves them cold. Their reaction is sometimes expressed apologetically sometimes diffidently, sometimes defiantly. But as individuals they all think that they are in a minority, and are therefore silent.

This is why I said at the beginning that the answer to a question about Iqbal's relevance could be in the affirmative, in the negative, or equivocal, depending on which Iqbal you had in mind, or what sort of Iqbal reader you were. But my point is that by raising the question of Iqbal's relevance, we betray an uneasiness, an uncertainty, about the status of Iqbal as a poet, and also about our status as his readers. Is Iqbal a poet or a reformer? Is he a politician or a philosopher? Are we his readers or his disciples and devotees? Are we his readers or his followers? For we know that reformist schemes are relevant to a time and a place; they flourish, then they wither and die or lose their potency. We know that political ideas gain and lose

currency; or they become modified or superseded with the change of time and place. We know that philosophies become popular or unpopular, fashionable or unfashionable, influential or weak. They are written about, affirmed, refuted, accepted, rejected, expanded, contracted, pruned, so forth. We know that reformers, political thinkers, philosophers, do not have readers in the way novelists have readers. They have followers, disciples, advocates. The tragedy of *King Lear* or the ghazals of Ghalib can be written about or discussed, but they cannot be rejected or refuted or accepted or expanded or contracted or modified or superseded. In short, reformist schemes, political theories, philosophical formulations can be relevant at one time or in one place, and not relevant at another time or in another place. And at all times and in all places, they can be rejected or accepted or modified. They can be, and are, articles of faith or unfaith. One can believe, or not believe, in them and order one's life accordingly. *King Lear* or the ghazals of Ghalib do not need to be believed in, in any sense of the term, except in the sense that one has to believe that they exist on some level. But they do not need to be believed in (or refuted) as doctrines. In other words, the question of relevance does not at all arise in regard to them.

So the question about Iqbal's relevance is in fact a euphemistic version of the question: Is Iqbal a poet? For we know that doctrines and programmers suffer from the condition of relevance. If Iqbal were surely known to be a poet, one would not ask: Is Iqbal relevant to us (or to any one)? Now the question about Iqbal's relevance (and therefore his status as poet) can be raised due to one of the several reasons:

(1) Iqbal is really not a poet, but it would be a pity not to grant him that status after all a vast bulk of his writings is in metre—so let's try to find reasons why we should crown him as a Poet.

(2) Iqbal is really not a poet, let us have it out, and say that he was a philosopher or whatever.

(3) Iqbal is an inconsequential poet: we should read him as

students read philosophy. He can't stand on his poetry alone.

(4) Iqbal is poet as well as philosopher; his poetry is relevant, his philosophy may or not be.

(5) Iqbal is really a poet; so the question of his relevance is irrelevant and unreasonable, and let's say so.

I quarrel with the first reason on the grounds of its being hypocritical. I admire the second and the third for their honesty, but disagree with them for they are not true. I dislike the fourth because it is shallow and uncritical. The philosophy (if any) is in the poetry. We cannot separate the two and say that one is relevant while we don't care if the other is so or not. I take my stand with the fifth reason, and hold that the question of Iqbal's relevance is irrelevant. I go further and say that the question has been raised because Iqbal criticism has done a great disservice to him and to Urdu literature by turning itself away from poetry and engaging itself in fruitless speculations or investigations about Iqbal's "concept" of time, Iqbal's "views" on selfhood, on Man, on the Regeneration of Islam, Iqbal's debt to Nietzsche, Bergson, Rumi, and so on. Is it not a pity that we are made to read Iqbal's long poem "Masjid-i-Qurtuba" as a statement on the theory of Time and Man's selfhood as expressed through *'Ishq*, and not as a poem? Is it not a pity that the critics debate the ideas expressed in the poem as true or false in philosophical, and not poetic terms? Does one, should one, read Iqbal's line *zulmat kade men mere shab-e gham ka josh hai*, as true or false in philosophical terms? I have no quarrel with philosophy, but I do not want to substitute it for poetry; just as I do not want to substitute poetry for philosophy. Would philosophers agree to have, say, *Critique of Pure Reason* read as a poem? Philosophers have, in fact, always inveighed against metaphor (which is the source of all poetry) and have sought to ban it from rational argument. Then why should literary critics agree to have poetry read as philosophy? Why should they try to gain "respect" for poetry by insisting that it is not poetry?

Anyway, the question has been raised, is Iqbal relevant to us

today? Let's try to answer it from outside. Let's say that Iqbal is relevant because the things that he talks about are relevant. Let's try to reduce his poetry to its main themes, which, some people say, are its essence. This method is not entirely new in literary criticism. It was made influential by St. Beuve and is still considered respectable in France. Thus Jean Prevost, after devoting years of study to Baudelaire stated (1953) that his main themes were Death, Evil and Love. But he also said that Baudelaire does not have so many themes as Victor Hugo, and in fact *Flowers of Evil* would be intolerable if it were twice its present size. No doubt he meant it as a tribute to Baudelaire, but he leaves us guessing if the intolerability would be because the themes are too few, or because the themes cannot be sustained artistically over a larger book. So this kind of criticism always raises the problem of the comparative intrinsic merits of themes, and also their absolute merit. Can one compile a list of the themes that make great poetry, and can one say to what extent a theme or certain themes should be treated to ensure greatness? The answer is, obviously and emphatically, No. We can't really achieve much by listing Iqbal's themes. But may be the list will tell us something negatively? For example, we know that there is no Love in Iqbal's poetry (in the sense that it is in Baudelaire), and very little Death (except in the conventional sense of people dying and affording Iqbal opportunity to moralize about the transience of things, life after death, and [occasionally] about regeneration). Also, there is no Evil in Iqbal. Even his Satan is sometimes a figure theatrically decked out in tinsel and silver foil, at other times he is an abstract concept very occasionally he is the symbol of revolt and self-determination. So Iqbal's themes are not Baudelaire's themes.

But perhaps it is unfair to mention Baudelaire against Iqbal. Let us say Dante. Now what are Dante's themes? The Soul's spiritual journey, Christ's vision as the Saviour, the existence of a moral order in the universe. These themes (except that instead of Christ as Saviour, we have Muhammad as the

perfect leader and the source or all knowledge) are to be found in Iqbal too. But do we question Dante's relevance? If not, why do we feel concerned about proving or not proving that Iqbal is relevant? Obviously, Dante is Dante because he used certain themes. Just as Iqbal is Iqbal because he used certain themes. But the readers and critics of Dante know that he was a poet not because he used certain themes, but because he used them in a particular manner. The mere use of the themes did not make him a poet. Many ideas and a large part of *The Divine Comedy's* scheme are common between Ibn 'Arabī and Dante. But while Dante is a poet, Ibn 'Arabī is not a poet. (I am talking about two categories of persons, one not necessarily superior to the other.) So the point is that mere enumeration of themes will not help to prove a person's being a poet, or even being relevant. For a theme may be treated in such a way as to show that though old, yet it is still relevant. The matter finally hinges on how a certain theme has been used.

But the moment we talk about how a theme has been used, we have moved away from the realm of idle philosophic pronouncement about the comparative merit or usefulness or relevance of themes. Rather, we are in the realm of literary criticism. We are no longer concerned with true or false statements or with teachings and doctrines which can be rejected or accepted or modified. Rather, we are concerned with metaphorical statements. For the only way that a certain theme can be used more than once (by the same poet or by more than one poet) without compromising its essence and yet making it seem or sound different is to state it metaphorically. Once stated metaphorically, the theme passes from the realm of relevance, because we judge of things', relevance in terms of their being true or false in a certain time and at a certain place. (Hegel made much of this; he declared that a thing that is true today need not be true tomorrow. I suspect that those who talk of poetry's relevance are Hegelians without knowing it.) Metaphorical statements make no claim to being true or false (or testable and modifiable). They represent states of mind;

criteria of validity do not apply to them. A statement can be metaphorical because it uses metaphors and/or because it itself is a metaphor. Sometimes a metaphor can be used to express another metaphor too. But the main point is that a metaphorical statement need not strike us as true in terms of either sense-data or logic or axiom or *a priori* knowledge; that is, in terms of whatever means we usually employ to know about the existence of things.

It is true that many philosophers of language have tried to prove that a metaphor also is a true or a false statement and so can be used to convey knowledge. They deny that metaphors convey any special kind of knowledge which cannot be judged in rational terms. But to deny that metaphors convey a special kind of knowledge does not prove that metaphors can be true or false statements. Other linguistic philosophers hold that metaphors do not exist, in the sense that there is no such thing as a metaphorical statement; all statements are literal. Yet others hold that there are no separate metaphorical statements, for all language is metaphorical. These theories notwithstanding the fact remains that in poetry we do encounter metaphors whose literal content is very different from what they seem to "say", and even if all language is metaphorical, a certain language seems to be more metaphorical than others. To me it seems saner and safer to stand with Hobbes, Locke and others and assert that metaphorical statements are useless for rational discourse. For this affirms the primacy of metaphor in poetry.

Iqbal, and all other persons, in so far as they are poets, let us into a world that lives on metaphor. One might almost say it lives metaphorically. Questions of relevance or irrelevance do not apply to such a world. The question that applies is whether it lives. Edgar Allan Poe denied that there could be a long poem because it was not possible to sustain the intensity of poetic creation for any length of time; Valery denied for more or less the same reasons that there could be something which was wholly a poem. These denials were really warnings. For

they meant that metaphoric vision was very hard to sustain; "reality", or whatever we call it, broke in again and again. Poets at all times have fought against the tendency of "Reality" to destroy metaphor. Yeats is a classic example of it. Iqbal did not fight too often and too hard. He seems to have thought that "reality" was valuable, even if drab. To the extent of and according to the number of times that he let go of metaphor, he laid himself open to inquiries about his relevance. Even a casual comparison of a few pages of *Bāl-i-Jibrīl* with a few of *Zarb-i-Kalīm* will make my point clear.

IQBAL'S ROMANTIC DILEMMA

The problem that I want to tackle here can be stated briefly: Why does not Iqbal appeal to the younger generation in the same way as for instance Ghalib does? Iqbal appeals to me (though I do not respond to all of him as I respond to all of Mir) but he holds no attraction for many of my age group. I am no longer a member of that much misunderstood band called the "younger generation". Yet the fact that some of my own age group do not take kindly to Iqbal shows that the comparative coldness toward Iqbal of most people under thirty and of practically all non-native young students of Urdu poetry is a phenomenon not entirely local or entirely new. Is it only a swing of the historical pendulum? Or has Iqbal been so long and so much venerated and adulated that he has become a sort of forbidding father figure, to be given respectful obeisance from a distance but with whom close encounter must be avoided? Has he become something like Milton whom every one acknowledges but nobody reads or enjoys? But Milton, we see, is bouncing back into the arena of literary taste, very much alive and very much a figure of our time. We are informed in C. A. Patrides' *Milton's Epic Poetry* that "it is Milton, not Donne, who is the poet of our time, who speaks in our idiom".

It is not many years since Iqbal's death. Our language or even poetic practice has not changed so much since his time as to make him an alien figure in our midst. So far as moral or metaphysical content is concerned, Iqbal's and Milton's God are not very different because Milton too placed "the divine beyond the reach of the human" in the sense that God's reach is every-where but man can reach God "or is able to enter into a

relationship with him . . . only to the extent that God has made available certain ways of understanding or certain forms of relationship". Yet Iqbal leaves most young people cold while Milton, so claim his modern admirers, speaks to us in the way that we would like to be spoken to. Thus the problem is not entirely of Iqbal's so called philosophical or metaphysical ideas or his highly formalised language. The answer must be found elsewhere. I think it is partly in the history of Iqbal criticism and partly in Iqbal himself.

A formidable mass of exegeses has grown on and around Iqbal, dealing with him mainly as a philosopher, a reformer, a political prophet, a champion of Islam, a mystic, a seer, a man devoid of most human weaknesses. Trivial details of his day to day life and his sayings have been documented in loving, almost idolatrous, detail. Iqbal the poet has been largely ignored. A pseudo-Iqbal has been built up and his readers have been expected to believe that Iqbal the poet subsists through the medium of this pseudo-Iqbal. This enterprise worked with the earlier generation. It worked so well that even the Progressives, who initially condemned Iqbal as a fascist and reactionary, later on found reasons to admire what they thought was his revolutionary outlook and his celebration of Man as the champion of progress and the enemy of the dark forces of anti-revolution. But this does not satisfy the younger people who demand that poetry should be good as poetry, not as philosophy. They prefer a doubtful philosopher but good poet like Baudelaire to a good philosopher but bad poet that Iqbal's idolaters seem to imply him to be.

Even on the purely literary level, Iqbal has often been admired for wrong things or wrong reasons. For example, he has been described as a symbolist i.e. either a user of symbols or a follower of the French poets who called themselves so. Yet neither kind of symbolism prevails in Iqbal. D. W. Harding says that "a symbol is a representation of which the general nature is evident but the precise range and boundaries of meaning are not readily specified, perhaps not usefully

specified". A symbol-word is a kind of incomplete key to a mystery, but the symbol-word makes this much clear: both the key and the mystery are charged with significance. As Bedil said:

O there are so many meanings that because of the alienness of language
Remained motionless behind curtains of mystery in spite of all their restless playfulness

Harding might be elucidating Bedil when he says: "If it is in any sense a symbol we may neither of us, reader or author, be confident in detaching a limited or translatable meaning because we are not certain what aspects of the event and what associations of the words describing it can be ruled out as irrelevant". Iqbal lacks the sense of mystery, of the unknowable, that symbolist writing so often reveals. The moment we are told that Iqbal wrote in symbols, we feel sceptical because in spite of his frequent verbal complexity (which also has been often ignored) we find that his voice generally speaks to us in plain, often too plain tones.

In the introduction to their vast compendium entitled *The Modern Tradition*, Ellman and Feidelson have said that though all romantics are not symbolists, yet all symbolists are romantics of some kind. This points toward the basic issues from which Iqbal's creative problem emerges. "Whatever else he may affirm, the symbolist holds that human imagination actively constructs the world we perceive or at least meets it more than half way, and does not merely reflect the given form of external objects . . . As an exponent of imagination . . . he is likely to be impatient with abstract reason, the God of philosophic idealism, and to disparage all mental powers except the concrete imagination. At his most extreme, he would say that the logic is mere police work and memory mere book keeping . . . . He would contend that . . . the verbal symbol, the language of a poem– is the key to the relation of mind and nature . . . and that its maker, the artist, is the truly heroic man". It is obvious that in spite of his insistence on

direct knowledge through *ishq* (Love) and his condemnation of the false, indirect knowledge through *'ilm* (philosophy or science), Iqbal believes in no such idealised role for the poetic word that the symbolist assigns to it. To the symbolist, the word is not merely the vehicle of expression; it is expression. The symbolist doctrine is basically a doctrine of the language of poetry. As M. H. Abrams has shown, different views about the poetical word lead to different kinds of poetry and different theories about it.

Did Iqbal have a conscious poetic to work from? We do not know for certain, but I think not. His observations on the theory and practice of poetry as reflected in occasional remarks in his letters, prefaces and lectures reveal a singularly uncritical mind. (This of course does not reflect on him as a poet, but that is beside the point). He makes such routine remarks about the uses of poetry as one would expect of an uncritical disciple of Plato. Salim Akhtar devotes one whole chapter of a book to what he is pleased to call "Iqbal's critical sensibility" but can find nothing better than his famous remarks apropos of Hafiz that "if a poet's writings aid and help the purpose of (social) existence, then he is a good poet and if his poems are opposed to life or have a tendency to weaken and depress the force of life, then that poet is harmful, especially from the national point of view". About rhyme and metre, Iqbal's remarks are equally inane. He is opposed to blank verse and states that rhyme as well as end rhyme (*radif*) are good for *ghazal* and *ruba'i*: *Nazm* does not need end rhyme, but must have rhyme. Consider this simplistic-dogmatic conventionality against the objections of Milton and Blake to rhyme and its defence and affirmation by Valéry who states that "rhyme establishes a law independent of the poem's theme and may be compared to be a clock outside of it". John Hollander discusses this and other views about rhyme and comes up with the conclusion that rhyme has a dialectical function. "Rhyme links syllables and thereby words, and thereby lines, and thereby large versified structures, and at each level of linkage, it performs another sort of 'musical' or 'rhetorical' work". I do not say that Iqbal

should have thought or said these things. I want only to emphasise that a symbolist has a particular kind of poetic which is based almost on a deification of the word and which flows from a deep sense of the mystery of the external world. By describing Iqbal as a symbolist we do him injustice and put off the reader from Iqbal when he finds that contrary to what he has been taught, Iqbal was no symbolist.

Iqbal's tragedy was not that he did not know or practise the symbolist doctrines. Rather, he was a romantic, but by avoiding overt Romanticism and rejecting or not exposing himself to symbolistic ideas, he closed off from himself a wide vista of expression which his nature as a romantic demanded and yearned for. Since all symbolists are romantics, it follows that a romantic symbolist would have greater resources at his command than a mere romantic. His greatest advantage would be that he would be free to dream and to lament if his dreams were taken away from him. Plato said that while dreaming, the wild beast in us becomes rampant and our untamed lawlessnesses reveal themselves in dreams. This is not very far from Freud, but in Plato this becomes the *raison d'etre* for his distrust of the poet as dreamer. Iqbal apparently disliked Platonic idealism; he says:

Plato is pining, restless between absence
and observation by presence;
Since eternity the place of reason-worshippers
has been betwixt and between.

Yet Iqbal's own view of art is generally Platonic. Instead of dreaming, he tries to theorise; instead of discovering or uncovering, he tries to believe that he knows. Northrop Frye defined the lyric (and by implication, the romantic) poet as an "isolated individual", talking to himself or a personal friend or even to an object. The romantic impulse is inward looking and is often sad without cause. Germaine Brée, quoting Camus, has summed up the entire modern-romantic artist's situation. Camus said that "the writers that preceded us, when they doubted, doubted their own talent. Today artists question the

very meaning of their art, their existence". Van Tiegham, who found no less than one hundred and fifty definitions of Romanticism in the teeth of Valéry's assertion that "only a person who had lost all sense of precision could attempt to define" it, was yet able to distinguish dissatisfaction with the contemporary world and restless anxiety in the face of life as the fundamental features of Romanticism. Nietzsche described the Romantic Truth very well in saying that art was the "cult of the untrue" which made tolerable "the insight into delusion and error as conditions of intelligent and sentient existence" that science has given us. "We must rest ourselves occasionally by contemplating and looking down upon ourselves". Nietzsche held that all "great spirits are sceptics. . . Men of conviction are not worthy of the least consideration in fundamental questions of value and disvalue. Convictions are prisons". The symbolist claims to see the word as The Mystery; the romantic doubts the validity of most things, except perhaps dreams. In poetry, they both reject Reason as well as Mimesis. Now where does Iqbal stand in the back-ground?

I will attempt to resolve this question by quoting from three poems in *Bang i Dara*, each dealing with the state of man. The first is entitled "Insan aur bazm i qudrat" (Man and the Company of Nature.) Man asks Nature:

The morning is truly and wholly a song of thy power,
There is not even a sign of darkness underneath the Sun.
I too am an inhabitant of this city of light;
Why did then the star of my destiny burn itself out?

Then Nature, who is obviously Iqbal's own theological self, draws upon a couple of Quranic verses and a hadith and reproves the protagonist for being caught in the web of yearning and desire and says that he would not be "black of day or deed" if he knew his essence:

If thou knewest thy essence,
Thou wouldst not be black of day or deed.

The second line can also be translated as "There would not be black day or deed then". But the intent is unmistakable. That a poet, grown up in the early days of European modernism and exposed in comparative youth to the German modernists like Hoffmansthal who had said in 1893 that modernism is both "analysis of life and the flight from life" and it is "the instinctive, almost somnambulistic surrender to every revelation of beauty, to a harmony of colours, to a glittering metaphor, to wondrous allegory" could still think of such simplistic solutions to existence, is somewhat surprising. But the Romantic attitude is still evident in the invention of a dialogue between the protagonist and Nature who actually ends up as the main figure in the poem. It is not a very good poem, not only because it hands out platitudes about the world, beautiful through the bounty of the Sun, and about Nature really being a mere creature of God and whose well-being depends upon the bounty of the Sun, while Man's inner self is illuminated through his own powers. The poem has some minor distinct stylistic faults too and seems to be suffering from an excess of words. Despite the Romantic device of dialogue and personalization of the inanimate, the facile conclusion of the poem shows Iqbal the Romantic in abeyance. The spirit of questioning is quickly made quiescent by preconceived logic. It is an immature romantic poem, reminiscent of Shelley in his weaker moments. The poet's assumptions about man and universe are elementary and uncritical. The didactic content is not integrated into the poem, but is plainly superimposed.

But the second poem, entitled "Insan" (Man) is of a different order altogether:

It is a peculiar irony of nature that
*It made man a mystery and yet**
Kept the mystery hidden from him.
Restless and eager is the desire and love of knowing.

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* This line can also be translated as "it made man a seeker of mystery".

Yet the secret of life opens itself not.
Wonder is the beginning, wonder the end
What else could a mirror-house contain?

The poem starts with questioning and wonder. Man himself is a mystery. The mystery is hidden from him, thus man himself is hidden from himself. The universe is like a mirror-house, reflecting a multiplicity of images; yet everything is unreal because all images are unreal and also because one does not know whose images these are, reflected thus in endlessness. Although the mirror-house is mentioned casually and not fully exploited as it would have been by Ghalib or Bedil, yet it performs its basic function of pointing up the hopelessness of wondering because although a mirror-house reflects images, it itself cannot evaluate them. It may ultimately become the image itself, but cannot know its nature. Wonder is a quality of the mirror also, because the figure reflected in it keeps silent, as wonder-struck people are. The clearer the mirror, the sharper the image; and the sharper the image the greater the wonder because it is the clarity and sharpness of the image that makes the mirror and image wondering, and therefore silent. Then the mirror is like the fourth dimension; it may show a door where no door is, it creates the illusion of a passage, a direction, even though all is looked and barred. Man lives in a mirror-house, or man himself is a mirror house, a mystery being. Yet nature, which the next few lines of the poem celebrate, is an open harmony, a joyful companionship and everything in it is intoxicated with the wine of being. The waves journey happily within the river; the river merrily traverses its way to the sea; the cloud sits astride the wind which flies it from place to place; the stars are imprisoned in the sky but are intoxicated with the wine of their own destiny and happy in their imprisonment; the early rising sun drinks the goblet of dusky wine hidden behind the western hills. Everything fulfils itself, drunk on its own existence and in the joy of companionship.

This is an extraordinary poem, even from Iqbal's standards. Not one slack word, not one wasted image and the total contrast shocks because it is so casually stated. There is harmony and order in the macrocosm, but disorder and loneliness in the microcosm which is supposed to be but an image of the macrocosm. Is then the picture of harmony in the universe an illusion, or is there really nothing common between a supposedly sentient universe and sensitive, intelligent mankind? The poem shows not a world in which "things fall apart" and "the centre can-not hold" but a world which never had a centre, in which things never were together. The poem abounds in images of movement and light and restlessness, but all light and movement is in the external world. Inside of man, all is dark alienation. This feeling comes through later too in some pieces of *Bal-i Jibril*, but only in tones of muted protest because by that time Iqbal had assumed the mask of a prophet and had ensured that all bad little patches and holes where ordinary human feeling comes through were carefully papered over. Christ, whose figure has moved all Romantics as a symbol of human suffering and loneliness (O my God! O my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?), is kept out of Iqbal's scheme of things because Iqbal tried to believe that Rumi and Ibn 'Arabī's convictions were sufficient to dissipate all doubts, all shadows. He took Rumi to be his mentor, and imagining himself a Dante, journeyed through the inner universe in Rumi's train. But man, simple man, with his "tenderness, joys and fears," whose distorted and tortured self obtrudes even in such a poem of belief *as Four Quartets*, was jettisoned by Iqbal somewhere on the way. Consider T. S. Eliot:

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailings,
The silent withering of autumn flowers
Dropping their petals and remaining motionless;
Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage,
The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayable
Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?

(The Dry Salvages: 49-54)

Four Quartets did not reach the tear-drained and passion-spent finale of "all manner of things shall be well" and "the fire and rose are one" without passing through an ordeal of fire. In contrast, Iqbal in his "Man and the Company of Nature" reduces everything to trite simple-mindedness. Man is no longer man, but a concept. Yet in the other poem, the simplification is of a different order because there the question has been reduced to essentials and answers are left out. Since "Insan" (Man) is infinitely the better poem, I conclude that the Romantic self of Iqbal wanted to write poems of this type, yet his social and official self led him into dreary deserts of the moralising expressed in bad poems like "Insan aur Bazm-i Qudrat" (Man and the Company of Nature). This was Iqbal's dilemma and he could never resolve it.

Let's now consider a third poem. Again entitled "Insan" (Man), it is a good example of Iqbal's rhetorical style. In contrast to "Man and the Company of Nature" which moralises unashamedly, this poem celebrates man's potential to reach out across time and space and become infinite. This is a typical Sufi thought, and has assumed almost the nature of convention. Iqbal's rhetoric forces him into generalities, statements which lack the power of apocalyptic vision. Using the artificially conventional images of the blindness of the *nargis* flower and immobility of *sanobar* tree, Iqbal triumphantly declares that man is superior to them because:

Whatever else is in the world, is slave to submission;
All and each power of man is active demanding and asking.
This particle has at all times a lust for expansion,
May be it is not a particle but a shrunken wilderness.

The thinness of the metaphor brings down the poem almost to the level of statement. There is no vision here, nothing of the revelatory, nothing of the mystical Rumi who has been there and comes back to tell the world what he has seen. Consider for example Rumi when he enunciates the concept of the limitlessness of Man because he is a part of the eternally bright light of God:

We were vastly spread out and all of one Essence,
There we were all headless and legless.
Like the Sun, we were all one Being,
Pure and unknotted like water.
And when that pure Light assumed appearances,
It became divided like shadows of minarets.

My translation is inadequate but it does bring out the revelatory tone. Image is piled upon image, metaphor upon metaphor– and all have been used as simplifying, not simplistic devices. Iqbal's rhetorical fulminations reveal a conscious purpose, a schematic approach, and therefore degenerate into platitudes.

My point is not that Iqbal's poem too should have expressed the doubt and loneliness befitting Romantic poems, true to Iqbal's real cast of mind. My point is that in such poems Iqbal seems to be too facilely believing, too much given to surface statements which do not really come from the innermost depths of his existence. He seems to declaim too much, as if trying to convince himself. That is why the poetry is lost in flat conceptual statements which do not reveal an ontological but rather a schematic preoccupation with Man, based inevitably on formulaic notions which fall short of even a priori notions and are nowhere near being revelatory.

The problem of Iqbal was that he was essentially a mystic-romantic like Bedil. But he imposed upon himself the role of a politico-socio-philosophical person with a message and practical purpose in life. He had therefore to suppress his Romantic leanings which would have led him through the wilderness of Hell before he would hope to win through to the gates of Heaven. He adopted the voice of a prophet, a solver of riddles, one who lays down the laws and rules for all things. Actually he was a soul in distress, as most modern poets have been. Sacrificing poetry and his own self to politics (in the most general sense), Iqbal became the victim of his own conscious mind. C.M. Bowra says that political poetry is the antithesis of all poetry which deals with the special, individual

activity of the Self, but even such poetry "must take account of purely poetical values, must eschew rhetoric and make no concession to public opinion". In pouring forth secrets of the Self and dilating upon the role of Islam in the world, Iqbal thought that he was giving to the people what he wanted to give them. But in fact, he was unconsciously playing to the political environment. Doubtless, his distrust of Western civilization and faith in Muhammad was a mainspring of his thought. But then this did not necessarily require the cacophonous insistence on belief, self-improvement, urge to power, the commitment to moral and political success, which we find in his inferior poems. After all, Yeats was very like Iqbal in many ways. Yet he did not give up his poetic role, he made "after the manner of his kind/ Mere images". Iqbal, by contrast, set out to construct a philosophy. And unfortunately it is his "philosophical" poems which are held out by critics as his best. "Masjid-i Qurtuba" (The mosque of Cordova) is a magnificent but soulless edifice. Yet it has been written about ad nauseam while a truly great poem like "Zauq o Shauq" (Desire and love and loving) has been largely ignored. Even in many of his philosophical poems Iqbal is a great poet, but because of his poetry rather than his philosophy. He felt like a romantic, and often wrote like one. In his best work he shows the same delicate feeling for complex words which is the hall mark of Shakespeare, the greatest Romantic of them all. Yet he liked to imagine that he was a thinker first and fore-most, and that was his dilemma. Pare away the rhetorical and the philosophical verbiage and the great poet emerges in all his glory of doubt and anxiety, of vision and apocalypse.

IQBAL, THE RIDDLE OF LUCRETIUS, AND GHALIB

It was, I think, Shaikh Abdul Qadir who first drew a parallel between Ghalib and Iqbal. In his preface to *Bang-i Dara* (1924) which was Iqbal's fourth book of verse (although his first in Urdu), Abdul Qadir wrote: "Who knew that after Ghalib, there will again be born in India, a person who would inspire a new spirit in the body of Urdu poetry and because of whom Ghalib's unrivalled imagination and unique way of saying things would again come into being and would be instrumental in the growth and strength of Urdu poetry". He concludes this paragraph with remarks about the lucky stars of Urdu poetry and Iqbal's universal fame. He starts the next with the simple observation that "there are many things common between Ghalib and Iqbal" and goes on to say, reverently if somewhat naively, that had he believed in metempsychosis, he would have held that Ghalib's spirit had been reborn in Iqbal's body.

This is all or nearly all, on which the whole myth of Iqbal's being a poet similar to Ghalib, or at least in the Ghalib tradition, rests. Some of the standard efforts to establish and embellish this myth can be found in the writings of Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, Syed Abdullah, Jagan Nath Azad, Sardar Jafari and Hamidi Kashmiri. As Hamidi Kashmiri notes in his *Iqbal aur Ghalib* (1978), Abdul Qadir's remarks are general and unsupported by illustrative examples; Abdul Qadir forgets that all great poets have "unique styles" and "unrivalled imaginations". Kashmiri might also have noted that Abdul Qadir virtually ignores the Persian of both Ghalib and Iqbal

and only mentions Ghalib's "love" (not mastery) of Urdu and Persian poetry as an after thought in the context of his metempsychotic fancy, and not as specific point of similarity between Ghalib and Iqbal. Hamidi Kashmiri rightly says that the efforts of Ikram, Abdulah and Azad, although more sophisticated, are no better. Unfortunately Kashmiri's own attempt too, occasionally brilliant and mostly right-minded though it is, fails because it seeks to find what is not there. I say right-minded because Kashmiri does try to get to the poetry, rather than the philosophy, and refuses to be content with such crass or simple minded similarities (if similarities they are) as "powerful mind and heart", "thought represented as feeling", "special kind of madness," "patriotic sentiments", "knowledge of the self" and so on. But the alternatives that Hamidi Kashmiri suggests are feeble in their own way, for he tries to outline the creative and thinking processes of the two poets and wants to show that it is in this context that Ghalib and Iqbal are similar as poets. Unfortunately, we know little or nothing about the creative or thought processes of either Iqbal or Ghalib, and not much about the creative process in general. And similarities of poetic devices or practices can be shown in poets existing as far apart as the Arabs and the Greeks, but such magnifying glass techniques would not make Imraul Qais an Arabic Pindar; and a fondness for elaborate similes would not prove that Homer and Kalidasa wrote in the same tradition.

My point is: granted that being great poets in the same language, and being great poets in general, Ghalib and Iqbal should have certain similarities. They do. Also, there should be certain immanent similarities in all great poetry. There are. But does this mean that all poets, or any two poets, are necessarily of the same type, if not the same tradition? The answer is, obviously, no. Yet since Iqbal has so often been presented by the critical establishment as the true inheritor of Ghalib's sword and mantle, the matter merits a somewhat closer look. Let's begin from Iqbal himself. He has an early poem, probably as early as 1900, on Ghalib. It is a typical poem of Iqbal's early period: glittering with hard, high-sounding Persian words

(though none of them exotic, and never in new or startling combinations, as was Ghalib's method), it impresses at first reading but does not say much. Close reading shows that many words are mere padding, and that the poem's deep reverberations are not of meaning, but of words used in an unusual, unconventional way, without much regard to meaning. For example, he talks of "the reach of the wings of the bird of imagination". It is obvious that where the bird is, his wings too will be: so there's no need to mention the: wings. Then, Ghalib was spirit or soul "through and through" and "the poetic assembly was his body". Here again, the poetic assembly should have been seen as a gross body, full of charlatans and dilettantes and clever poetasters and a few genuine poets. So it could not have really been a fit body for a poet who was spirit or soul through and through. These are hyperbolic expressions suitable for a Qasida, not for a tribute to a great predecessor. Anyway, the most important lines are:

> *It is not possible to equal you in felicity of expression,*
> *Unless perfect thought be the boon companion of imagination.*

From this we can deduce that Iqbal wanted imagination to be supported by "perfect thought", a hazardous enough proceeding at the best of times. Coleridge would of course have been indignant: his "imagination creatrix" worked from what he called "the shattered fragments of memory" through the "steamy nature of association", and for him, the dim "vestibule of consciousness" or the "twilight realms of consciousness" were the workshops of poetry. But Iqbal's own beliefs do not matter just now. What matters is to know whether Ghalib too would have agreed that his poetry was, or that poetry in general, should be the expression of imagination supported by "perfect thought"; or, more important, is Ghalib's poetry the expression of such an imagination? These questions have always been evaded by critics of Iqbal and Ghalib.

It is undeniable that for Iqbal, Ghalib was always a figure of fascination. Iqbal's love of Bedil seems to have waned but

Ghalib seems to have grown in his esteem over the years. Thus in *Javid Nama* (1932) we find Ghalib among the few persons of symbolic power and significance that the Zinda Rud (who is Iqbal himself) encounters in his journey of the heavenly and ultra-heavenly spheres. Ghalib inhabits the sphere of Jupiter, his companions are Hallaj, the mystic and poet who was declared apostate and murdered by the theologians of his times, and Qurratul Ain Tahira, a poetess, roughly contemporary with Ghalib, who was put to death for her adherence to the Babi faith. What Ghalib could be doing in this mixed company is any body's guess. We can presume that Hallaj speaks for all three when he says (Arberry's translation):

The free man who knows good and evil,
His spirit cannot be contained in Paradise.
The mullah's Paradise is wine and houris and page boys,
the Paradise of free men is eternal voyaging;

One assumes that this is also what Iqbal considers Ghalib's beliefs to be. That is, Iqbal represents Ghalib as a seeker after a new order where Paradise may be a place not of conventional luxury, but of self-understanding, or whatever should be the true man's aim. This assumption is confirmed when we see Iqbal putting into Ghalib's mouth one of Ghalib's own ghazals which seems to call for a new world-order. (It is the famous ghazal: "Come, let's reverse the laws of Heaven". Arberry fails to note that Ghalib's address to Zinda Rud is not Iqbal's, but Ghalib's own composition). But Iqbal has unscrupulously excised some Lines from this ghazal, which now appears to be a call to a new world-order, instead of the frankly erotic-invitational ghazal that it really is. Iqbal has excluded verses 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15. The 15th verse is the maqta and makes the meaning very clear:

I and union with you! Ghalib doesn't really believe this;
Come, let us reverse the laws of Heaven.

Ghalib is not writing a spiritual or political manifesto; he is, like Whitman, singing of "the body electric". There is no trace

of the so called "perfect thought" that Iqbal seemed to admire so much in Ghalib. Later in the same episode, Iqbal makes Ghalib address him as "the knower of the mysteries of poetry like me" (that is, like Ghalib). But Ghalib in fact denies permission to Iqbal to enter higher mysteries and says that it would be a sin to say more. He says (Arberry's translation):

These words overstretch the string of poetry;
the poets have adorned the banquet of words,
but these Moses lack the White Hand.

It is clear that this is Iqbal, not Ghalib, speaking. Ghalib all his life was a worshipper of words, seeing in them the ultimate instrument to reveal all meaning. "Poetry is creation of meaning" was his famous credo. According to Iqbal (as quoted above) poetry is mere words; it solves nothing. Poets lack the White Hand of Moses: they have no miracles to perform.

So we see Ghalib and Iqbal working from two different sets of assumptions. Much has been said by our critics about Ghalib's philosophy of life, which does not really exist, and too little about his very real sense of the livingness of words. Undoubtedly Ghalib's poetry has an intellectual vigour unparalleled in Indo-Iranian poetry, but Ghalib himself had no claims to philosophical erudition. His friend and contemporary, Hazrat Ghamgin Khudanuma, a mystic of Gwalior, tried to express some abstruse aspects of mystic thought in his poetry and produced ghazals and rubais which are very difficult to read and understand. Ghalib did not attempt even this much. There is no such thing as ordered thought in Ghalib. In fact he disdains mere thought and prefers to talk in terms of experience. What is often mistaken for philosophy in Ghalib is just his esoteric and abstract way of looking at things. His obscurity and ambiguity are admiringly, delightfully or deprecatingly described as the result of his philosophical cast of mind. Similarly, his apocalyptic tone is mistaken for a philosophical way of saying things. Most of Ghalib's poetry reveals him as a Romantic, his feelings tempered by a certain respect for the intellectual and material superiority that

Victorian England had achieved through scientific inquiry. Yet even this admiration had a certain childlike naiveté, a tendency to romanticise. Witness his exhortation to Syed Ahmed Khan not to write about the derelict archaeological remnants of Delhi, but to observe the "Sahibs of England" who had launched ships of iron into the seas and made them run by the power of steam. Iqbal, on the other hand, always liked to adopt the role of a hard bitten anti-western intellectual who had been there and had been thoroughly disillusioned. He admired Nietzsche, yet did not approve of his godlessness and ultimate madness. In *Bal-i Jibril*, Iqbal calls Nietzsche "the inspired madman of the West" and describes him further as "the famous inspired-mad philosopher of Germany who could not properly assess the experiences of his heart and so his philosophic ideas led him astray." Yet it is precisely where he goes astray that Nietzsche would seem to meet Ghalib. In *Payam-i Mashriq* Iqbal describes Nietzsche as one who:

Dropped a hundred new upsets in the West:
A madman got into a glass maker's shop!

For it was a consciousness of madness round the corner, madness in the scheme of things, that oppressed all romantics from Baudelaire to Wordsworth to Ghalib and Yeats. Contrary to the happy discovery of Robert Frost that "poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom", Wordsworth wrote:

We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.

Coleridge, in celebrating the state of dreaming as "the shifting current in the shoreless chaos of the fancy in which the streaming continuum of passive association is broken into *zig-zag** by sensations from within or without" was in fact anticipating the manifesto of the surrealists, the greatest Romantics of them all. We see Baudelaire cultivating his madness "with terror and delight" and Yeats coming to terms with the world,

* Italics Coleridge's.

as Frank Kermode shows, "at the cost, the world being what it is, of immediate extinction". Yeats attempts this feat because, like Iqbal, he lives in the world of politics and reality. Unlike Iqbal, however, he knows that one can come to grips with only one thing at a time: life or poetry:

Nor law nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds;
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seem waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death

(An Irish Airman foresees his Death)

It is tempting, though unfair to Iqbal, to compare this with Iqbal's rather weak poem, "A Haji on the way to Madina." Yet the comparison is legitimate, for both poems spring from the same kind of impulse; neither law nor duty impels the airman, nor is the Haji moved by either to go to Madina. Both are driven by the "lonely impulse of delight". Yet Iqbal only sermonises and pontificates. Although he too rates the impulses of the heart above the cautioning of mind (or reason), he cannot leave the Haji's impulse to speak for itself. Like all autocratic spirits, Iqbal does not trust his subject: he keeps firm control. And the poem comes out soggy with sentiment and heavy with sermonizing:

The traveller across the wilderness of Hejaz has no fear:
This is the secret in the self-exile of him who lies buried in Yathrib.
Though security lies in being with the royal train,
Yet the pleasure of love is in the diminution of life that danger brings.
Oh, this Reason, how clever it is, always weighing losses!
And. the impulse of man, how bold that is!

So we see that Iqbal's disdain for reason is merely

hyperbole, merely a conventional poetic stance. He in fact preferred to come to terms with life, or philosophy, and let the madness go. Ghalib did otherwise and so declared boldly and bitterly:

God, that is, one who is kinder than father,
We roamed from door to door for we were no good.

Iqbal didn't care for those who were no good: all must do something. Though Ghalib did not know madness, he certainly knew despondency and fear and uncertainty. He had also seen madness, both individual and collective, at close quarters. His own brother was mad; he nursed him affectionately until his death. He also saw the British holocaust of the post mutiny months with his own eyes. ("Delhi is not a town any longer, it is a camp, a cantonment, an army", he cried in one of his letters, even at the risk of displeasing the censors). He also knew the utter wastefulness, the ultimate futility, of existence. His poetry is full of the sorrow of unfulfilment, aware of the final subjection of life to death. In a very early three-part ghazal he wrote:

Blood not apparent in the heart, I have grown pale;
I am myself like the nest of the colour-bird that has flown,
My face shows signs of regret:
Like the comb I have bitten the back of my hands, all over.
To those who were killed, I give by my poetry the desire to be restless,
For I am plectrum to the veins of the throat that was cut.
My eyes opened wide, and the garden so eye-alluring;
But no avail, for I am the dew drop that has seen the sun.
The real source and cause of my restless quest never becomes apparent,
I am tongue-cut, like watery waves.
I, without art or craft, was really the brilliance-principle of the mirror.
But am a deeply hurting thorn in the foot of people's eyes.
I sing because of the heat of the joy of my imaginings:
For I am the bulbul of the uncreated garden.

It is not possible, ever, for me to rest:
In the wilderness of sorrow, I am the deer that has spied the hunter.
In freedom or bondage, I am full of pain,
Sometimes I am the sigh that is drawn, sometimes the tear that drops.
Asad, just as the rabid one is scared of water,
I am scared of the mirror, for people have bitten me.

It is not possible, in this brief essay, to even attempt an analysis of the force and power of the numerous verbal skills displayed, of the metaphors and images deployed, of the associative values of the various words drawn freely from mysticism, esoterism, tradition and environment. But we can see here the whole spectrum of the Romantic attitude, from alienation and madness to the voyage of discovery, the love of the unknown, the tragedy of the failure of communication, the pressure of dreams, the celebration of unreason, of direct vision. Iqbal's poetry is of a different order altogether. No one who has read these verses (and a thousand similar ones) can ever seriously believe that Ghalib and Iqbal have the same way of looking at or thinking about things.

For better or for worse, Iqbal is essentially a poet of hope; Ghalib is not. Ghalib is a poet of Romantic revelation: Iqbal is not. Iqbal is a poet with a message; Ghalib is not. For the sake of the message, Iqbal can sacrifice poetry. Ghalib has no such problem. For Ghalib, words are the ultimate reality; for Iqbal, they are the means to another end. Ghalib is the poet of compression and introspection; Iqbal the poet of dilation and explication. Both use metaphor, both use verbal skills, but in different ways. Iqbal's greatness is in his poetry, not in his ideas. But the poetry comes from a different drawer: it is in the tradition of the great Iranian Qasida and Mansavi writers. This can be seen clearly in his failures in "Lala-e Tur", the first section of *Payam-i Mashriq*. The quatrains are mostly explicatory or admonitory or verbose. Sometimes I feel astonished by Iqbal's ability to stuff so much verbiage into four

short lines. Yet the longer poems are of a different calibre altogether. "The Conquest of Nature", "The spring", "Song of the Stars" are outstanding poems by any standard. Though the ghazals of *Zubur-i Ajam* and *Bal-i Jibril* have been very highly rated, they cannot be said to surpass his best longer Urdu or Persian poems.

We must remember, as A.A. Suroor has said, that in Iqbal the philosopher was always engaged in a battle with the poet. Suroor breaks down the components of Iqbal's personality into poet, philosopher and man of religion. And insofar as in Islam religion and politics are indivisible, it can be said that Iqbal's polities was his religion. Like Yeats, Iqbal too was a practicing politician. But Yeats (as I have mentioned above) chose either politics or poetry at different times, and finally chose poetry only. Ghalib had no such conflicts to face, for Ghalib had no desire to explain the world: he was content to reflect it through his consciousness. Iqbal's desire to explain and thus conquer the world enmeshed him in many contradictions which Suroor has pointed out, particularly with regard to Nietzsche and Bergson. He was, as I have tried to show elsewhere, a romantic at heart, but he chose to repress his romanticism most of the time. Ghalib had no such constraints.

The images of man which emerge from the two poets' work are strikingly discordant, and well illustrate my point. Iqbal is the poet of man triumphant, even rampant. Ghalib is the poet of man speculant, not passive, but certainly not interested in doing things– someone like Rodin's *Le Penseur*. Man in Ghalib is harried, maddened, driven from pillar to post, finally coming to rest in thinking over his estate. Ultimately the experiencing self becomes one with the tired, feeling self:

Dry lips of those who died in thirst,
Pilgrimage spot of' those whose hearts are sorrowful;
Despair through and through, mistrustful through and through,
I am the heart of those who were cheated by love.
From head to toe, I reflect brokenness;

I am the intent of those who were unutterably sad.
In appearance sophisticated, in effect regret
Asad, I am the smile of those who wither.

Now Iqbal naturally couldn't countenance this vision of man. He could be bitter against the injustice and rapacity of men, particularly Western men: he could be distrustful of modern science and scientific thought; he could be contemptuous of individuals who did not seek uniqueness. (He wrote in a famous letter to Nicholson that God's kingdom on earth was nothing but a democracy of unique persons, presided over by the most unique individual possible). But he could never see man as defeated, or lost in abstract thought or in general despair. This is both his strength and weakness. Ghalib's man was *his* strength and weakness, but the two hardly ever meet. (Needless to say, I like Ghalib's man better; for one thing, he had a sense of humour!)

Two poets can be said to work in the same tradition, or to be similar to one another, if their poetics and poetic practice are largely similar; or if their vision of life is similar; or then if either or both flow from the same compulsions of literary tradition and ethnic environment as reflected in their poetry. For Ghalib and Iqbal, none of these conditions obtain. Ghalib wrote within the essentially Romantic tradition of Sabk-i Hindi (Indian Style). Iqbal at his best has been compared to Rumi, Hafiz, Sa'di, even Firdausi. Nothing could be farther from the Sabk-i Hindi. Iqbal was undoubtedly a serious poetic craftsman and artist even in his weaker poems. But his poetics was different from Ghalib's. I have already touched upon this and also upon the vastly different visions of Man in the Universe as they emerge from Ghalib and Iqbal. Let us now look at some specific aspects of the poetic practice of both.

Ghalib's intellectual vigour has always been commented upon. The superiority of his mind is so obvious that even the most obtuse reader can not fail to notice it. Iqbal's mind also often impresses us as superior. But while Iqbal's mind is ratio-cinative, Ghalib's is entirely inductive. This becomes clear

when we set Iqbal side by side with Shakespeare, who also loves to speculate and ruminate, and who often invests even the most obvious things with a dignity that marks all speculative utterance, as opposed to mere descriptive or summarising statements. Let me quote from one or two sonnets: the themes are two perennials—the transient nature of things and evil in this world:

When I consider that everything that grows
Holds in perfect but a little moment,
That this large state presenteth naught but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked by the self-same sky;
Vaunt in their youthful sap at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;

(Sonnet 15)

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity.
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:

(Sonnet 66)

Iqbal has used both themes, but the first one recurs more frequently. In his mother's elegy he has occasionally combined the two. Consider these lines:

Alas, this world, this house of lament for old and young!
In `what enchantment of yesterday and tomorrow is man imprisoned!
How difficult is life, how easy death,

In the garden of life death is cheap like the wind.
There are earthquakes and lightnings and famines and ailments;
What daughters does the Mother of-Days have!
Death in poverty's dungeon, death in the mansion of wealth,
Death in the wilderness, in houses, towns, gardens and wastelands.
Death creates disturbances in the silent sea,
Ships drown in the very arms of the waves.
Neither courage to complain have we, not power to speak,
Is it life, or a neck-band that chokes the throat?
The caravan has nothing but the lament of the bell;
All our possession is naught but a weeping eye.

The force of these lines must be clear even in this translation; also their banality. It must be obvious that Iqbal can only deal in generalities; even his metaphors are generalized. (Lamentation house for old and young; enchantment of yesterday and today; Death creating disturbance in the silent sea; life as a throat-choking neck-band; caravan having nothing but the cry of the bell.) The moment he comes to specifics, Iqbal sinks into total bathos. ("There are earthquakes and lightning and famines and ailments"). He is conscious of time, but not of the passing of time: all things are stagnant in his world. In spite of the many kin aesthetic images, the death and destruction is not seen as growing decay, but as calamity. Rather than guiding him, his power of association occasionally leads him astray. (Having written the wonderful line about the silent sea, he must mention ships sinking in the embrace of waves.) Where his associative power does not lead him astray, he conceives a finalizing image. (No power to complain or speak, for life is a throat-choking neck-band.) Yet the force of this stanza remains on the surface, for there are no specific images or objects to concentrate it and drive it inward. Yes, there is injustice and pain in this world; yes, man is stupid and evil and helpless; yes, life is always snuffed out by death. But these are mere statements, fortified by generalized metaphor. A similar

example can be found in "The Royal Graveyard."

In a handful of dust, the soul is belaboured by tyranny;
The moment breath moves through the alleys of the flute, it becomes a lament.
Man's life is like a sweet singing bird:
Alighted on the branch, warbled a moment, gone.
Alas, what our coming into the garden of Time, what our going!
Budding forth from the bough of life, we bloomed and withered.
Death is the meaning of every beggar and king's dream.
The cruelty of this cruel being is the picture of justice.

Here again, we see the same type of mind at work: a mind that revels in generalisations and occasionally pulls off a metaphoric *tour de force*. (Note the first two lines and the first hemistich of the last.) There is no coming to grips with the effect the subject (death, and ephemerality of life) has on those who suffer it. The contrast with Shakespeare must be obvious. Our impression of Iqbal's superiority of mind comes from the fact that he can generalise grandly. In some other poems, it is also due to his vast learning and frequent classical and modern allusions: he talks about Einstein and Goethe *et al* as his equals and not as remote, godlike beings. But the poems that I am discussing here leave no lasting effect, for there is virtually nothing for the sensory or speculative faculty of the reader to hold on to. Against this, Shakespeare creates a chain, either of growth (as in sonnet 15), or of parataxis (as in Sonnet 66), based on objects or objective-like realities. In Sonnet 15 he begins the chain of images of organic growth and decay by introducing "grown" in the very first line. And he starts with consideration, not declamation. ("When I consider") The progression of growth and decay is contrastively presented by the image of the huge state being only as show (shadows) created by the sky or even perhaps in the sky. And all shows (plays) have their end implicit in their very beginning. From "a little moment" to "wear their brave state out of memory" is a

double play, and both are dependent on time and decay. (Even "little moment" is contrastive of "memory" which is supposed to perpetuate the moments.) In sonnet 66 the parataxis is carefully controlled, one image leads to the next, and all are drawn from life, with additional imagery thrown in, again from life. (Guilded honour; rudely strumpeted, strength by limping sway disabled; doctor-like folly; captive and captain etc.)

Iqbal's poems seem thin by contrast, but they come from a different tradition. As I said, his is the tradition of the great Qasida and Masnavi poets of Iran. Consider Khaqani lamenting the plunder and pillage of Saljuqi Iran by the Turks:

Tears of blood have risen forty yards high,
No, they have risen forty steps higher than the moon even.
Both the image of security and the imprint of peace have disappeared from the beholder's eyes.
Cool your heart against Time, for Time has become the friend of mischief;
Be fearful of the elephant, for it's been having nightmares.
Where should the wise man go, for the world has become the house of tyranny?
Where should the honey bee draw sustenance from, as all vegetation has become pure poison?

I need not labour the similarities of technique and manner between Iqbal and Khaqani, but must stress their love of generalization and declamation.

Shakespeare worked from image to metaphor; Iqbal generally worked from metaphor to rhetoric. Ghalib, and other poets of Sabk-i Hindi, did neither. They worked from metaphor to image, or from metaphor to metaphor. They loved to compress and exemplify. Rather than work with concrete objects, they loved to make abstract things concrete. The best example in Ghalib of the theme of ultimate desolation and decay is of course the famous fragment "O you new comers to the carpet-spread of heart's desires." I will not quote it here for it is extremely well known. I need only mention that Ghalib

uses all the conventional objects (saqi, music, wine, singer, gardener, flower-seller, candle) as metaphors, not as specific objects, as Shakespeare does. That he too achieves a Shakespearian effect is another matter.

It has been said, often as a desperate last resort rather than as a qualitative judgement, that Iqbal resembles Ghalib in his Persianism. This is true as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. Ghalib uses Persian in the Indo-Iranian manner: his Persian causes bewilderment among Iranians more often than admiration. But it is correct and idiomatic Persian within the Indo-Iranian tradition. Iqbal writes more often in the Iranian manner. So far as Urdu is concerned, Iqbal's Urdu is more Persianised than most Urdu poets', but his word combinations are more often Persian and Arabic words strung together with *izafat* (semantic or linguistic device to indicate relationship.) He rarely invents new or long combinations, as Ghalib does. Also, Iqbal does not use some peculiarly Persian tricks like omission of *izafat* or its inversion, or using one set of *izafats* with another. Ghalib does all these things as child's play. Hamidi Kashmiri, among others, has listed some of the more telling combinations in Iqbal. (In fact it has been a favourite pastime among critics to list out such combinations in Ghalib or Momin or Anis or Iqbal.) But Iqbal's Persianism does not really run in this direction. He revels in using rare, individual words or phrases unexpectedly; most such words, or their contexts; wouldn't occur to Ghalib. For example, he describes *hawa* as *aasuda*, *darya* as *narm sair*, *aujum* as *kam zau*, *khizr* as the knower *of asrar i azal*. He talks of the *tilism* of the moon and *afsun* of the night, waves as *mast i khab*. (All this in the first stanza of "Khizr-e Rah") Similarly, words and phrases like *zamistani hawa*, *parvezi hile*, *sawad-e rumatul kubra*, *shan-e dilavazi*, *bedaulati*, *zujaj*, *kasad*, *jan pur soz*, *tare aware-o kam amez*, *zard ru chand*, *namud-e simiai*, *ibnus sabil*, *kasul kiram*, *junud*, *thughur*, *rahil*, *rahiq*, *kar kusha*, *kar afarin*, *nuri nihad*, *saada o raushan jabin*, *ismat i pir i kanisht*, *digargun*, *tailsan*, *asar* (pl. of *'asr*) *khurafat*, *filazzat*, *tihi kadu*, *atash i rafta*, *ghiyab*, *zamir*, *khamosh be kakh o ku*, *shuub*, *yuraq*, *zunnari*, and so on, would never occur to Ghalib. The large number of Arabic or Arabian origin words must also be noted in the above list. Because Iqbal is the only poet since Ghalib whose

vocabulary is so distinct from the common vocabulary of Urdu poets, critics are apt to conclude that Ghalib and Iqbal have the same kind of vocabulary. In fact, Iqbal's Persianism is simpler with more elements of direct or indirect borrowings from the Arabic. Iqbal has a larger number and greater variety of words at his command than Ghalib. But he uses them in comparatively less artful ways. In the three-part ghazal of Ghalib that I have referred to above, we find: *khun dar jigar nihufta*, *bazardi rasida*, *ashiyan i tair i rang-e parida*, *sar i tapish*, *mizrab i tar hai gulu i burida*, *chasm va kushada*, *gulshan nazar fareb*, *shabnam khurshid dida*, only in the first four *shers* quoted. Such complexity and elaboration are simply not Iqbal's metier. Also, Ghalib is equally at home with both kinds of combinations, the *izafi* (genitive) and the *tausifi* (identifying.) Often his combinations can be read both as *izafi* and *tausfi* at the same time. The instant *chashm va khushada* is a case in point. It can also be read as *chashm-e va khushada* to give a slight shift of meaning. Iqbal cannot handle this kind of *izafat* fluently and his poetry affords few examples of it.

By putting two representative pieces side by side, we can see the Persianism of Ghalib and Iqbal in action and analyse the differing predilections of the two poets. From Iqbal, I have chosen the most highly Persianised stanza in the "Masjid-e Qurtuba", itself a very Persianised poem. From Ghalib, I have taken the famous ghazal *shabnam ba gul i lala* from his so called "authorised" divan; it is a comparatively late ghazal and so cannot be dismissed as atypical (as most of the earlier, "suppressed" and extremely Persianised ghazals can.) Since Iqbal's stanza has eight *shi'rs*, I have picked the first eight from Ghalib's ghazal too. The results are interesting:

Genitive (*tarkibi*) *izafats* in Iqbal: *Haram i Qurtuba*; *mojizai i fan*; *khun i jigar*; *qatra i khun i jigar*; *khun i jigar*; *sina i adam*; *kaf i khak*; *soz o guduz i sujud*; *naghma i* Allah hu (Total 9, including repetitions; effective, 7; or at best, 8.)

Genitive (*tarkibi*) *izafats* in Ghalib: *Gul i lala*; *dagh i dil i bedard*; *nazargah i haya*, *khun shuda i kashmakash i hasrat i didar*; *badast i but i badmast*; *baandaz i gul aghosh kusha*; *hawas i shola*; *afsurdagi i dil*; *kaf i khakistar*; *qafas i rang*; *nishan jigar i sokhta*; *wahshat i dil*; *dava i giriftari i ulfat*; *dast i tah i sangamda*; *paiman i wafa*; *hal i shahidan i guzashta*;

tegh i sitam. (Total 17; no repetitions).

Genitive *izafats* in Iqbal with more than one *izafat* in a group; *qatra i khun i jigar*; (total, 1.)

In Ghalib: *dagh i dil i bedard*; *khun shuda i kashmakash i hasrat i didar*; *badast i but i badmast*; *nishan i jigar i sokhta*; *dava i giriftari i ulfat*, *dast i tah i sangamda*, *hal i shahidan i guzhashta*; (Total, 7; no repetitions.)

Unusual combinations in Iqbal: *Sozo gudaz i sujad* (Total, 1.)

In Ghalib: *nazargah i haya*; *khun shuda i kashmakash i hasrat i didar*; *baandaz i gul aghosh kusha*; *qafas i rang*; *dast i tah i sangamda*; *aina i tasvir numa*; (Total, 6, no repetitions).

Identifying (*tausifi*) *izafats* in Iqbal: *'arsh i mu'alla*, *sipihr i kabud*; *paikar i nuri*; *kafir i hindi*; (Total, 4; no repetitions.)

Identifying (*tausifi*) *izafats* in Ghalba: *dil i bedard*; *jigar i sokhta*; *dast i tah i sang*; *shahidan i guzashta*; *aina i tasvir numa*; (Total 5; no repetitions.)

Izafats in Iqbal that can be read as both genetive and identifying: *Haram i Qurtaba*; *kaf i khak*, *naghma i Allah hu* (Total, 3; no repetitions).

Same in Ghalib: *Dil i be dard*, *kaf i khakistar*; *qafas i rang*; *tegh i sitam*; (Total, 4; no repetitions.)

Genitive and identifying *izafats* occurring in the same group in Iqbal; Nil.

In Ghalib: *dil i bedard*; *nishan i jigar i sokhta*, *dast i tah i sangamda* (Total, 3; no repetitions.)

Constructions in Iqbal which are peculiarly Persian: *raft o bud*, (Total, 1.)

In Ghalib: *Shabnam ba gul i lala*; *khali ze ada*, *nazargah i haya*; *dil khunshuda*; *dast i tah i sangamda*; (Total, 5; no repetitions)

The above analysis will show clearly that Iqbal's Persianism is different from Ghalib's both in quality and quantity. Iqbal is less complex, less elaborate, less unusual, less versatile and less Iranian.

A look at the two poets' use of the conjunctive letter *waw* will show that Iqbal revels in the use of this conjunctive and Ghalib uses it sparingly:

In Iqbal: *raft o bud*; *khisht o Chang*: *harf o saut*; *soz o surur o sujud*; *soz o gudaze sujud*; *zauq o shauq*, *salat o darud*; *salat o darud*; *rag o pai*; (Total nine; including one repetition and one having two. Effective total seven plus one).

In Ghalib: *kaf i khakistar o bulbul*; *mashuqui o behauslagi*; *majburi o dava i*; (Total 3; no repetitions, but in two cases, the conjuctive has occurred with *izafat* and in the remaining one instance, it joins two unusual words, *mashuqi* and *behauslagi*).

The fact that Ghalib uses the conjunctive in elaborate constructions does not invalidate the observation that Iqbal has much greater propensity for it. In fact, Ghalib's elaboration proves that while Ghalib would use the conjunctive in question only when he must, Iqbal uses it at all available opportunities. In my opinion, half of Iqbal's Persianism is in these constructions with conjunctives and the other half in his use of comparatively unusual Persian or Arabo-Persian words. Ghalib's Persianism is a compressive as well as decorative device, rooted in the Indo-Iranian attitude to language. Iqbal's Persianism is used more for shortening than for compression, and very rarely for deliberate decoration. Yet an interesting point is that while Iqbal's Persianism rarely falls below a certain minimum in quantity, in any given poem, we may find 'the Persian content in many ghazals of Ghalib to be lower than what the high Persianisation of many other ghazals might lead us to expect. In other words, there is greater difference between the maximum and minimum in Ghalib than in Iqbal so far as Persianism is concerned. Similarly, Ghalib has never used in his Urdu ghazal the typical Persian metre *munsarih matvi maqbuz maksuf* (*mufta'ilun fa'ilun*, *mufta'ilun fa'ilun*) which the Persians used almost only for Qasidas. Some of Iqbal's most remarkable Urdu poems are in this metre. The inference should be obvious.

Fundamentally, a poet stands or falls by his style—that is, how he uses his words, how meaningful and associative and interesting he can make them. And style reflects the poet's poetics, both as the theoretical foundation (conscious or

unconscious) of what he values as poetry and as the extra literary considerations that affect what he says and shapes the way he says it. We have seen that Iqbal and Ghalib have different sets of poetics, different assumptions and different practices arising out of those assumptions. Iqbal's poetry, for better or for worse, cannot be considered entirely in isolation from his philosophy and politics. The danger lies in valuing the philosophy and politics for their own sake, and not for the poetry's sake. There is equal danger in playing with the philosophy and politics extrapolated from his poetry; that is, of considering the poetry valuable because it has such a lot of philosophy and politics. The concept of a poetry of ideas existing side by side with, or even against, a poetry of experience is all very well, but our critics have been all too prone to stress the ideas and ignore the poetry.

"Whatever in Lucretius is poetry is not philosophical, whatever is philosophical is not poetry", Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth in 1815. One might almost say that this was the riddle that Iqbal had unconsciously set himself to solve, and which Ghalib never had to consider. Nabokov solved it in his own way when he made the first person protagonist in one of his stories declare: "I will contend until I am shot that art as soon as it is brought into contact with politics inevitably sinks to the level of any ideological trash." Plato would have preferred the ideological trash, but Nabokov's mistrust flows from a genuine apprehension. Unfortunately, in our case, it is mostly the critics of Iqbal and Ghalib who have been writing ideological trash. I'd prefer both Ghalib and Iqbal to exist separately as great poets.

THE IMAGE OF SATAN IN IQBAL AND MILTON

...what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument,
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.
(*Paradise Lost*; I., 22-26.)

Thus spoke Milton, almost in the very beginning of his great effort, to prove that God is always right. As has often been pointed out, Milton conformed to the accepted classical manner in stating the theme of his epic before proceeding to tell the story. But, as Dennis Burden says, the simple claim to assert eternal providence and justify ways of God to men leads into a complicated poem. "The assertion of divine providence is the assertion that God's goodness, justice and mercy are not contradicted by the spectacle of the world that he has made. The poem is thus an exercise in classification, finding system and order in what could, if wrongly taken, appear to be random and inexplicable". This exercise in logical theology, in order to succeed, needed two things. First "to tease rationality out of the Genesis account of the fall" and second, to show that the misery of Adam and Eve was relieved by God in his goodness and that God's goodness extends and purifies all men through the Messiah. Although the sin of Adam and Eve made the Satanic tragedy possible, yet things are not entirely hopeless: God's mercy, like his wrath, has good reasons, and mercy always prevails in the end.

That Milton failed in his first enterprise, and since he had attempted to give a logical foundation to his poem, he failed in the second enterprise too, has been a commonplace of Miltonic criticism, particularly among those whom (for the sake of simplification) I will call the Romantic critics. Their ancestor in this view was Blake who maintained in his "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" that "The reason Milton wrote in fetters, when he wrote of angels and God and at liberty when of devils and hell is because he was a true poet of the devil's party without knowing it." Blake here consciously identifies the Poet with the Romantic Rebel, that is, as one who disregards logic and rationality, discards received knowledge, acts in what Weber called the value-rational manner and who gives to independence of mind precedence over all things. Blake must have sensed that Milton was trying to create a logically, and therefore mathematically, coherent myth. He had condemned mathematical form as "the dead form" as against the "Gothic" which he declared to be the "living form". It was therefore, natural that Blake should have seen Milton "in fetters" when he was writing traditionally about angels and God and "at liberty" when writing dramatically of devils and hell, because the "true poet" is supposed to be a Rebel and an individualist, as was Satan.

The main point, if there can be one main point in literary criticism, is whether we should read the poem in terms of what Milton set out to do or in terms of what he actually did. It can be said that what Milton actually did should be taken as what he set out to do, his own avowals to the contrary notwithstanding. But there are certain, and rather deep, pitfalls in this approach, particularly in the case of Milton. For example, Milton wrote within a certain theological and philosophical framework. Our understanding of what he actually did is bound to be incomplete if we ignore that framework. There is no doubt that even unintended meanings are valid meanings if the poem supports them. But in a poet like Milton and in a poem like *Paradise Lost* we are more than unusually inclined to find inner evidence for meanings which

do not really exist. This is because most of us do not like to be considered old fashioned. We are afraid that if we read *Paradise Lost* as a Protestant epic or even as a Christian epic, we would be sneered at as country bumpkins lacking in critical insight. Doubtless, purely "literary" readings of *Paradise Lost* have tended to produce a vague impression that Milton really did admire Satan. And it is certainly more jolly to be faintly diabolistic than an ardent deist. Literary criticism must, as Helen Gardner says, come to terms with the phenomenon that "most readers of the poem [Paradise Lost] who approach it without the aid of scholarship concur in finding its main imaginative appeal in the figure of Satan. . ." Indeed there should not have been much difficulty in coming to terms with this fact. It is not so much scholarship as a dispassionate view of Milton's theology which is required. All or almost all good religious poems can be interpreted so as to become enjoyable and acceptable to people of widely divergent religious persuasions. Let us not forget that even Greek tragedies are basically religious poems. Milton's failure was not that he intended to write a poem about the fall and eventual redemption of man but ended up by producing a glorification of Satan in which (as Coleridge said) he gave Satan "a singularity of bearing, grandeur of sufferance and a ruined splendour. . ." Coleridge admitted that Satan finds in "self the sole motive of action." He, as a "mighty hunter of mankind", has a "lust of self", yet Milton some how invests him with "the very height of poetic sublimity". Coleridge thus seems to imply that where Milton failed as theologian, he succeeded as poet. Shelley found "Milton's Devil as a moral being" to be far superior to his God presumably for the same reason. And in our own time Empson pithily said that "the reason why the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad." These and numerous others are really judging the theology, not Milton– yet they are somehow disinclined to look at the framework of belief and rationality on which Milton constructs his theology. Milton sincerely believed that he could make his poem a theoretical model of the Universe into which everything would be

rationally and reasonably explained. For him Christian belief and rationality were true because the Christian God differed from the pagan gods who were only irrational and vindictive. Indeed, literalism was the standard Christian doctrine. Calvinists had made it even more restrictive. Thomas Aquinas stated clearly that "We must hold to the historical truth of the narrative as a foundation of whatever spiritual explanation we may offer." Patrides comment on this: "Protestants agreed with marked enthusiasm, expressly permitting allegorical interpretations only when the matter is before proved by other firm testimonies' or—in plainer terms—when the allegory is rightly grounded upon the literal sense.' A strong minority were even more restrictive, persuaded with Calvin. . .This attitude... testifies to the ever present Christian concern lest the allegorical approach to the Bible should deprive Christianity of its uniquely historical character. . ."

Thus, according to Milton, all that happened was hard history and as Aristotle said, if an improbable event comes to pass, the very fact of its occurrence is proof of its being probable and true. Milton, as Patrides asserts, was not writing even a Catholic poem, but a Protestant poem which required a more strict doctrine and which made greater demands on man's ability to believe unseen and indirectly experienced things. Milton believed that since his views were true, they made logical sense as well. All he had to do was to operate the logic in the poem. He went so far as to claim that he would justify the ways of God to "men"—that is, all individuals in their individual capacity since the dawn of creation. This enterprise was somewhat similar to the attempt of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in his commentary on the Qur'an to rationally explain all the myths and miracles mentioned in it. Sir Syed failed, and Islamic scholars were perceptive enough to see that he failed precisely because the myths and miracles of the Qur'an did not need any rational explanation. Milton failed to realize this fully and his Romantic admirers the more so. In fact, Milton had a faint understanding of this position, but he limited it to the rather

routine concept of the inscrutability of God, whose motivations man cannot fathom but whose handiwork he should admire. He writes in the Argument of Book VIII: "Adam inquires concerning celestial motions, is doubtfully answered, and exhorted to search rather things more worthy of knowledge." This wry bit of prose is followed by some incomparable poetry. Adam wants to know why this whole machinery of Universe should grind endlessly only to produce day and night for "this earth a spot, a grain/an atom, with the firmament compared." Raphael somewhat coldly replies:

To ask or search I blame thee not, for heaven
Is as the book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read his wondrous works, and learn
His seasons, hours, or days, or months, or years:
This to attain, whether heaven move or earth,
Imparts not, if than reckon right, the rest
From man or angel the architect
Did wisely conceal, and not divulge
His secrets to be scanned by them who ought
Rather admire;

(*Paradise Lost*, VIII, 66-75)

It is obvious that what is involved here is the physical, not metaphysical or moral aspect of things. Adam only wants to know what makes the Newtonian machine work and is gently rebuked. This is further borne out about a hundred lines later:

be lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;

(*Paradise Lost*, VIII, 173-174)

Adam does not ask: Why does man suffer? Why was he created? These and similar questions will be resolved by the poem. God as an engineer may be inscrutable, God as ruler is not.

So Milton's consciousness of the impossibility of understanding or attempting to understand and justifying God's ways was not

really acute enough to make him appreciate the futility of his exercise. His critics have failed almost to a man to face the conclusion that Milton's Satan is more imaginatively appealing than his God not because Milton was an admirer of Satan, but because his theology let him down. Had he not been overridden by the notion that religious beliefs were historical truths and therefore could be made the basis of a logical model, he would have written a poem more positively full of belief and the joy of believing without reason. Pascal, with his cautious reasoning joining hands with his mysticism, had said that the proofs for the truths of miracles are at least as strong as those for their falseness. Milton was no mystic. He was not even a Dante who was no mystic either but who had learnt a point or two from Ibn 'Arabi.

And this brings me to Iqbal. Since it was fashionable to visualize the place of all poets with the rebels, Milton was identified with Satan. In this, as I have attempted to show above, Milton himself was an abettor by his insistence on Reason. Ignorance of the Christian tradition within which Milton worked also made its contribution to the myth. There was no such case with Iqbal. In the case of Iqbal, however, the Islamic tradition which was his source of inspiration was, or rather should have been, well known to the Urdu critics. But following the dictates of fashion and a misguided zeal to discover an outsider in every poet, they averred that Iqbal, despite his meagre and occasional treatment of Satan, was an admirer of Satan something like Milton. Needless to say, both pictures are false. I do not say that Iqbal was a standard Muslim (a *momin*). He had his moments of doubt and anxiety—perhaps more than Milton—and this makes his poetry the more warmly human. I certainly do not say that Iqbal was a great poet because he worked the Islamic doctrine into his poems, just as Milton was not a great poet because he was a Christian or a Protestant poet. But I do say that the tradition within whose parameter Iqbal broadly fits has no place for an admiration of Satan or even an attempt to rationalize divine motivations– an attempt which in Milton's case created a false impression of near diabolism. Had Iqbal

tried to rationalize, he too might have ended up with a low-key *Paradise Lost*. His two famous poems, "Jibreel o Iblis" in *Bal i Jibreel* and "Taqdeer" in *Zarb i Kalim* only deal directly with the Fall. In fact the latter poem runs no such risk of diabolism even at the hands of the most ardent Satanite because it is borrowed from Ibn 'Arabi of whom Milton was ignorant, much to his cost.

"God out measures our conjectures and imaginings" is a famous Persian saying. It is based on a prophetic tradition in which Muhammad advised Umar and some others, not to speculate about esoteric and metaphysical questions relating to God's existence and man's freedom or choice. This theme has been stated again and again by Islamic theologians and Sufis. It was most tellingly stated perhaps by Nizammuddin Auliya of Delhi when he said that if God is merciful to his subjects it is his grace (*Fazl*), and if he is wrathful, it is his justice (*Adl*). Put in such unequivocal terms, the doctrine destroys for ever all attempts to explain, justify or defend God's actions. That Iqbal believed this doctrine need not be asserted. In spite of his insistence on the power of the Self, Iqbal makes it clear that whatever the Self becomes it becomes only by turning towards God and by his aid. Man takes only what God gives but God cannot be held answerable for what he has or has not given. In his "Pir o Murid" (The Sage and the Novice) which has a strangely Baudelairean effect, he quotes Rumi:

Man is but seeing, the rest is skin
Seeing the Friend is what truly seeing is.
and again:
Wings take the falcon to the king;
Wings take the crow to the graveyard for carrion.

Obviously God makes man see and gives one kind of creature wings to fly towards the king (spiritual elevation) and makes another's wings take it towards carrion. Neither can complain.

Working with these assumptions, or rather beliefs, Iqbal had

no need to rationalize. It is clear that he is not worried about the fundamental events of man's creation and fall. He has no questions to ask. The Christian thinkers were hard put to explain the "why" of things. Why should have God permitted Satan to rebel and have let him seduce Eve into eating the fruit whose "mortal taste" gave birth to death and "all our woe"? Milton explained that out of evil comes good because Satan did nothing but

> *Heap on himself damnation, while he sought*
> *Evil to other, and enraged might see*
> *How all his malice served but to bring forth*
> *Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown on man ... .*
>
> (I, 215-219)

But Milton dexterously skirts the questions: Why did Satan rise in rebellion? Who gave him power to do so? Milton's theology would not be complete without resolving these issues, but he only conforms to the pseudophilosophy of Christian apologists (Calvin not excluded) that "God's permissiveness in no way reduces control over the created order", as Patrides puts it. This is only begging the question. On the contrary, the Qur'an, from which all truly Islamic traditions receive authority, does not raise this issue but states plainly that all angels "except Iblis" refused to pay obeisance to Adam. The paradox of free will and God's eternal providence is not mentioned, the implication being that it does not matter. Iqbal's poem "Satan and God" in *Zarb-i-Kalim* touches both questions. But he makes no attempt to philosophize. Making explicit what could be claimed to be implicit in the Qur'an, he merely states that Satan was free to choose. He does not ask if this freedom was innate to Satan or was vouchsafed by God. These considerations are unimportant because in Iqbal's scheme one accepts or rejects totally. One does not temporize or prevaricate. Not that Muslim theologians (*mutakallimin*) had not tackled these problems. They had, but Iqbal had nothing to do with them and worked on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The poem is worth quoting in full:

Satan: O Lord of creating and all that was created,
I bore no grudge against Adam,
Oh he was but a prisoner of far and near, late and soon.
Words of pride were possible not in thy presence
But yes, thou hadst not ordained my obeisance!
God: When was this mystery discovered to thee, before or after thy denial?
Satan: After, O thou from whose splendid luminousness spring the maxima of being!
God: (Looking towards the angels) His baseness of nature has taught him this argument; Says he "Thou hadst not ordained my obeisance!"
He terms as helplessness his own freedom.
The cruel joker gives his own burning flame the name of smoke!

In letting Satan argue on the premise of lack of free choice, and thus making God himself responsible for the fall of man, Iqbal briefly touches upon the paradox of providence which had troubled both Christian and Muslim (not specifically Islamic) thinkers. Christian theologists affirmed that Satan was only God's slave. He did what he did because God willed so. They further explained it by saying that God did so for the good of man. God "turns evil into good; and fetches good out of evil". In *Paradise Regained* particularly, Milton seems to substantiate God's permissiveness by letting Satan claim that he has "large liberty" even to the "heaven of heavens":

...but that oft
leaving my dolorous prison I enjoy
Large liberty to round this globe of earth,
Or range in the air, nor from the heaven of heavens
Hath he excluded my resort sometimes.
(*Paradise Regained*, I, 363-367)

It is noteworthy that Milton makes God the active agent in conniving at or at least not preventing Satan's "resort" to the highest heaven. Thus God becomes the author of evil not only

on the terrestrial earth, but also in the ramified heavens. It is not surprising that Empson thought Milton's God bad or evil. But this conception of God is directly related to Christian theological thought and not to Milton's alleged predeliction towards Satan. Iqbal smoothly dismisses all this by characterizing Satan's argument of lack of free will as an after thought. His God coolly places the onus on Satan whose burning flame (of pride or knowledge or individualism) denied him the pliability so characteristic of other angels. Milton's Satan finds "permission from above" and leaves us holding a riddle which no amount of rationalisation can unwind:

Thy coming hither, though I know thy scope,
I bid not or forbid; do as thou find'st
Permission from above: thou can'st not more.

(*Paradise Regained*, I, 494-496)

Iqbal's refusal to admit consideration of Satan's lack of choice is nowhere more apparent than in his famous Persian poem "*Taskhir-e fitrat*" (Conquest of Nature) in *Payam-i-Mashriq*. The poem has been quoted as an example of Iqbal's so called celeberation of Satanic individualism and rebellion against authority. Critics with vested interests have gleefully referred to the third canto where Satan tempts Adam not with sin but with visions of liberty and dynamism against the confinement and eventlessness of heaven. Thus, according to them, Satan is the catalytic agent who fires Adam's heart with a flash of self-consciousness; he plays a positive role in weaning Adam from his innocent but abject dependence on powers that exist outside. Thus Satan awakens the man-ness latent in Adam.

Apart from the fact that this somewhat fanciful reading of the poem disregards the Qur'anic version of the myth which was never far from Iqbal's mind, we must note that the Adam of the poem is not really the first human being of the Qur'anic legend, nor is the Iblis that fire-creature who refused to give homage to Adam. In "Conquest of Nature" Adam and Satan are mere ideas, allegories. All allogory, as C.S. Lewis says,

travels from the inner to the outer plane of things. Iqbal objectified his ideal of the dignity and power of man and his capacity to outsoar his limitations, both physical and spiritual, by finding the conveniently allegorical characters of Adam and Satan. According to Iqbal, man should be eternally questing. Restless travel towards heights that transcend the highest of the heavenly bodies, a burning of the heart that illumines the soul, a rising up of the fiery intellect (the al-qalb of the Sufis) is what man is made for and is that towards which he should strive. Thus 'Conquest of Nature" (as the very name suggests) is not a theological poem as *Paradise Lost* or as Iqbal's own two dialogues, one between Satan and God (which I have quoted above) and the other between Satan and Gabriel, which I will refer to presently. "Conquest of Nature" gives expression to Iqbal's own peculiar ideas about the cultivation of self consciousness by man. It is an existentialist poem, just as Iqbal's observations on the story of the Fall are marked by thoughts existentialistic in character, making reference as they do to "man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self-consciousness." In fact, Iqbal confirms the free choice of Adam and thus of Satan in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. The life of *soz o saz* (which can be loosely translated as inner fire and the music of joy) which Iqbal considered the highest mode of existence is also celebrated by Adam in "Conquest of Nature" after his ejection from heaven:

How pleasurable is it to make soz o saz of all life
and to soften the heart of hill and forest and desert by just one breath!

"Conquest of Nature" ought to be placed side by side with that rather neglected but extremely lyrical and mystically majestic Urdu poem "Angels bid farewell to Adam for Heaven". (*Farishte Adam ko Jannat se Rukhsat Karte Hain*) in *Bal i Jibril*. This poem does not have the rhapsodic (and sometimes rather vague) joyousness at Adam's "liberation" that is so characteristic of the Persian poem. It is a bitter-sweet,

yearning farewell in which the angels try to awaken Adam to his potentialities. It is less a Fall than a period of trial which Adam is to undergo. (This again is borne out by Islamic tradition). The angels say to Adam:

Thou hast been vouchsafed restlessness over day and night,
We know not if thou art of earth or quicksilver,
We hear thou hast grown out of dust but
Thy nature is of stars and moon.
Would that thou saw'st thy beauty even in dream
Thy sweet sleeping would then be sweeter than a thousand wakings!

Thus Iqbal is able to disregard the entity of Satan in Adam's farewell. This he could do because Satan's theological persona presented no problems to him. He had no dilemmas like Milton's to resolve. Otherwise Iqbal almost always refers to Satan as the evil principle, the symbol of ungratefulness and wrong direction. He quotes Rumi with approval in *Payam i Mashriq* that:

Knows he who is good of luck and knower of secrets
That cleverness is from Satan and love from Adam.

Here "cleverness" stands for Reason (*'Aql* in Iqbal's, not Sufistic, sense) and "love" for that state of mind which leads to the knowledge of Truth (*ma'rifat*). The precedence of Love over Reason is Iqbal's favourite theme. (Science, that is, *'Ilm* or reason is total veiling. Love is total presence, he says.) In *Javid Nama* Iqbal advises his son to destroy Satan with the sword of the Qur'an and that

Sons of men have set their hearts on Satanness
I saw naught but disorder in Satanness.

In the long Persian poem *Pas Che Bayad Kard. . .* he again identifies unfettered Reason with Satan:

Reason under heart's dominion is Godness,
When unfettered from the heart, it is Satanness.

In the same poem, he states that the mores of Western science and culture are so corrupting that they could convert Gabriel into Satan and that the Western culture has denigrated knowledge (the act of knowing) through "city and desert." Thus Iqbal clearly negates reason and rationalism in matters of faith. Indeed, he humbles his Satan before his God precisely because Satan tries to rationalize.

Milton, on the other hand, shared the dilemma of the Christian theologians who had been obliged, almost from the very beginning of their history and particularly since the Renaissance, to walk a very tight rope. As J.W. Burrow states in his stimulating introduction to a modern edition of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, there have been three great intellectual upheavals since the beginning of the Christian era and each has threatened its whole structure of accepted ideas. The second such, according to Burrow, was "the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which displaced the earth from the centre of the universe and established models of inquiry in the study of matter which presupposed regular sequences of cause and effect and seemed to leave little or no room for the interposition of a miracle working deity." Newton had tried to show that the Universe could be explained in mathematical terms, though in spite of his best efforts, some of the more emotional or emotive beliefs had to be sacrificed. But Newtonian astronomy left the problems of good and evil and personal choice untouched, at least by explication. It also could not really explain or give scientific basis to such pronouncements as the famous observation of a 17th Century Vice Chancellor of Cambridge that "man was created by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 B.C. at 9 0' clock in the morning." Burrow says that not many would necessarily have been so specific as all that, but it is a fact that theological time was taken quite seriously and "it has often been pointed out that when the poet apostrophized Petra as rose red city half as old as time, he meant it."

It is obvious that when this kind of rigidity of belief is sought to be injected into a poem with the claim that it can be made to hang

together under all circumstances, the structure is bound to show leaks and cracks sooner or later because even if the poet's masterful design papers over the obvious inconsistencies, the inherent anomalies will make themselves felt under scrutiny. That is why two so very different critics as David Daiches and Northrop Frye have reached almost identical conclusions. Daiches states with a candour rather uncharacteristic of even nominally Christian critics that Milton overlooked the fact that there could be no logical answer to the question of evil existing in a world ruled by an omniscient, omnipotent and yet benign Deity. Frye makes a more dramatic comment by contrasting the gulf between the dramatic and conceptual aspects of the poem and says that "the doctrinal coherence" of the poem is seriously impaired because the theological situation is the opposite of the dramatic situation. Even Rajan admits that "God's affirmation of man's freedom is sometimes too strenuous to be convincing because there are times when the totalitarian nature of his deity, or to put it more bluntly, the force of cosmic will, breaks through the containment of Christian humanism which the poem is so earnestly seeking to erect." It is true, as Rajan points out in his foot note to this remark, that Augustine also had substituted Will for Reason in his hierarchy of values (and had, perhaps by implication, affirmed that Christian humanism was not as humanistic as all that) but the fact remains that in spite of Rajan's claim to the contrary, Milton's God, whenever he opens his ambrosial mouth on the subject of free will (Frye's phrase) comes out as a rather heartless and certainly an unconvincing tyrant:

...whose fault?
Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have: I make him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall
(*Paradise Lost* III, 96-99)

Note the slight element of doubt in "all he could have". God does not say "would have" purposely. Yet if Satan had been just and right, he should have had all that he would. Also note the rather weak pleading: it was sufficient for him to have

persevered in God's faithfulness. He was not required to perform any specific duties. Before elaborating the concept of "freedom to fall", I would like to quote further:

> *Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.*
> *Not free, what proof could they have given sincere*
> *Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,*
> *Where only what they needs must do, appeared,*
> *Not what they would?*
>
> (*Paradise Lost* III, 102-106)

This is obviously an attempt to rationalize the concept of freedom by seeking support from the idea that all created beings have also freedom to worship because if worship were to be exacted, it were no worship at all. Alistair Fowler, co-editor of the comprehensive Longman's edition of Milton's poetical works, provides a useful commentary from Milton's "De Doctrina Christiana" that "if free will be not admitted, whatever worship or love we render to God is entirely vain and of no value; the acceptableness of duties done under a law of necessity. . .is annihilated altogether. . ." This creates more questions, but God is not mindful of them. The Qur'an explicitly declares, "We did not create the Jinns and the humans but for that they worship", and sets aside all questions. If the Jinns and humans do not fulfil the purpose for which they were created, so much the worse for them. This may be bad logic, but is good theology. Milton's God flounders yet more:

> *They there as to the right belonged*
> *So were created, nor can justly accuse*
> *Their maker, or their making, or their fate,*
> *As if predestination over ruled*
> *Their will, disposed by absolute decree*
> *Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed*
> *Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,*
> *Foreknowledge had no influence on their fate, Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.*
>
> (*Paradise Lost* III, 111-119)

The problem that if God foreknew, was he not also responsible? is neatly solved by saying that since their fault would have none the less occurred even if it was not foreknown, God's foreknowledge had no influence on the occurrence. Fowler again provides useful commentary from "De Doctrina Christiana" that Milton believed in a liberal version of the doctrine of predestination but he carefully defined predestination and foreknowledge in such a way as to exclude necessity or determinism. He quotes Milton: "Future events which God has foreseen, will happen certainly. . . because the divine prescience cannot be deceived, but they will not happen necessarily, because prescience can have no influence on the object fore known, inasmuch as it is only an intransitive action". But this brings the questioner to a number of recalcitrant issues. If the fault was "no less proved certain" even if "unforeknown", then was it not rather preordained? And how does one distinguish between's God's knowledge and God's will? Are knowing and willing not the same so far as God is concerned? Particularly when we see that God, even though knowing that the "fault" would occur, did nothing to prevent it? And how to reconcile God's utterances here with Paradise Regained I, 494-496 quoted earlier, that Satan does as he "finds permission from above" and "can'st not more?"

Thus we again see Rational Christianity falling over and over again into the webs spun by its own casuistry. Milton's greatness of course is that he faces the issues nevertheless. Iqbal was saved the embarrassment by sticking to his beliefs and by sticking to a tradition which demanded full acceptance so that it could be understood. ("I believe, so that I may understand" had also been the doctrine of Aquinas when faced with the intellectual revolution created by the rediscovery of Aristotle in the late Middle ages). I am not sure that Iqbal could have come out with as much honour as Milton if he had to go "behind the event" of the Fall as Milton did. Rajan rightly says that Milton faced "peculiar difficulties in his account of the Fall. It is not easy to differentiate dramatically freedom to fall from a propensity to falling to point a vulnerability which falls

short of being a defect. The many poems and plays on the subject bypass the problem by not going behind the psychology of Adam and Eve." Almost immediately after the lines quoted by me above, Milton makes God say that there is hope for man, though indeed the tone that he uses belies the image of Mercy that he seems to be projecting:

...They themselves ordained their fall.
The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self depraved: man falls deceived
By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,
The other none: in mercy and justice both,
Through heaven and earth, so shall my glory excel,
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.
(*Paradise Lost* III, 128-134)

Milton's God does not speak of Grace (of which the medieval Muslim Sufi had spoken, see above) but of mercy and justice. Echoes of medieval monarchs seem to be very near. The monarchical tone resounds yet more ominously later:

Hear all ye angels, progeny of light,
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers,
Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.
This day I have begot whom I declare
My only son, and on this holy hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand; your head I him appoint;
Then, in the words of Christ:
Mighty Father, thou thy foes
Justly hath in derision,
(*Paradise Lost*, V, 735-736)

This much show of pomp and power brings God nearer to human reckoning but makes him no more sympathetic, which is what Milton wanted him to be. According to Rational Theology, God's "purposes were in some sense akin to the purposes and feelings of man himself." This urge towards authropomorphism only made matters worse because it

necessitated a further urge to examine and question God closely. Milton took the risk and he is the greater man and poet for having done so. He failed, yet he did dot deserve the wishful comments of Romantic interpreters that his Satan is an imaginatively appealing and emotionally satisfying figure in spite of himself and that Milton was "of the devil's party". Perhaps the only critic who has realized this fully is W.J. Grace in his "Ideas in Milton". To quote just once: "But there is irony in the fact that Milton cannot deal .with his subject of justifying Providence without occasionally skirting such 'wandering mazes'* himself. Primitive religious art can assert, since it does not attempt to bring reverenced mystery before the tribunal of the human intellect, but sophisticated religious art runs into danger when it asserts rather than asks questions. Milton took the plunge of attempting to present a more coherent and rationalized explanation of biblical events".

Milton attempted but failed. Iqbal, as I have said, did not attempt at all. Or rather, he shied off from attempting, as we have seen in "Taskhir i Fitrat" (Conquest of Nature) where he contents himself with creating an allegorical rhapsody. The two short pieces where he does show an inclination to go "behind the event" of the Fall are Miltonic in style but not in approach. The dialogue between God and Satan (entitled *Taqdeer* or "Fate") which I have quoted in full, is the only And found no end, in wandering mazes lost (P. L. II, 561).poem in which Iqbal confronts Satan with God. In this poem Satan is not the degenerate creature that C.S. Lewis would have us believe the Miltonic Satan to be ("from Hero to General, to politician, secret service agent and thence a thing that peers in at bed room or bathroom windows and thence to a toad and finally to a snake—such is the progress of Satan") but he is clearly shown as more cunning than intelligent, eager to score a point yet not unwilling to ingratiate himself with God who gives him short shrift. The much more famous and complex dialogue (Gabriel & Satan) in *Bal i Jibril* apparently shows Gabriel—and by implication God—on the defensive and has therefore often been quoted as Iqbal's glorification, or at least approval,

of Satan. Let us first have the poem in full:

Gabriel: Old Comrade, how goes the world of colour and fragrance?

Satan: It is inner fire and music of joy and pain and scar and searching and yearning.

Gabriel: Often we talk of thee in heaven. It is it not possible that the torn hem of thy raiment ever be repaired?

Satan: Alas Gabriel, thou know'st not the secret: In breaking, my stoup of wine intoxicated me! My passing again into this estate is not possible now
How silent is this world without house and street!
For him whose despair is the secret of universe in fire
Is God's word "Despair not" suitable or plain "Despair"?

Gabriel: By thy denial thou hast lost positions of eminence;
Say, what honour for angels remained in God's eyes?

Satan: By my venturing is lust for growth in the handful of dust
My machinations the warp and woof of wisdom's raiment.
Thou watchest just from the shore the strife of good and evil;
Who braves the stormy tempest, thou or I? Khizr and Ilyas both are powerless, handless and legless
My storms rage from ocean to ocean, river to river, stream to stream!
If ever thou find'st privacy, then thou must ask God
Whose blood in spilling gave colour to Adam's tale?
I throb and sting into God's heart like a thorn
Thou art only a perpetual O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!

No doubt on superficial reading the poem strikes us as a powerful defence of Satan, and some would enthusiastically state that a defence of Satan always implies an indictment of God. These interpretations were particularly acceptable to such Urdu critics as thought it fashionable to have read "Man and Superman", a few snatches of Nietzsche, some of Milton, and then to have proceeded to spread this Western marmalade over the oatmeal bread of Iqbal so that both his and their

respectability was assured. In point of fact, the poem is deeply ironical and is anti-Satan to the extent that such a poem can be "anti" anything. It is true that Gabriel is on the defensive—the fact that he begins the overture to Satan and wistfully reminds him that the lost comrade is still very much a comrade affirms this. But Satan falls into the trap only too easily by indulging in heroics. His description of the material world is couched in terms which would– but for the *soz o saz* (inner fire and music of joy)—be scarcely recognizable to Adam, who according to Iqbal is the true inheritor of the earth. That is why the confrontation is not between Satan and Adam (who is the Lord of Creation), nor between Satan and God (before whom Satan abjectly fawns in the *Zarb i Kalim* poem), but between the arch-intellectual Satan and the innocent Gabriel. For the world is search and scar and pain and yearning only to those who have not fulfilled themselves. As Rumi said and Iqbal quoted in his "Pir o murid" (The Sage and the Novice) printed immediately before the poem under discussion in *Bal i Jibril*:

> *Wings take the falcon to the King;*
> *Wings take the crow to the graveyard for carrion.*

Doubtless Satan upheld the right to individual affirmation or denial and this quality Iqbal has always admired. In his allegorical interpretation of the Fall in "Taskhir i Fitrat" (Conquest of Nature) and in a celebrated passage in *The Reconstruction* he seems to have taken an almost Augustinian view of Adam's sin. But his Satan remains a plain and simple theological Satan, an individualist as the Qur'an also affirms. In breaking, his stoup of wine made him intoxicated, but him only. He gained individual fulfilment. He unwittingly reveals his nature by describing Heaven as a world devoid of house and street. Because baseness of nature always hankers after the hustle and bustle of material existence. Whether employed gainfully or otherwise, the meaner natures find their natural house and habit in market places. Iqbal is here alluding to a saying of the Prophet that market places are Satan's dwellings. Thus Satan's dig at the peace abounding in heaven is not

Iqbal's criticism of its alleged lack of colour and variety but a self-condemnation by Satan. Similarly, once when God has affirmed that there is no salvation for Satan, what better than to rationalize by saying that Adam and his strife and struggles came to pass just because I was made to despair of God's mercy and thus my despair is the key that winds the clockwork of the Universe? This claim, even if true, makes Satan only a minor functionary in God's scheme of things, gives him a negative and passive role and generally approximates him to a rather esoteric but perverse view of Yazid, that as the author of the massacre at Karbala, he was only doing what God had ordained him to do. As I have shown above, Christian theologians also have occasionally held the view that Satan's evil was the ultimate cause of good. But this is no defence of Satan.

Satan revels before Gabriel in his knowledge of sin and tribulation. But he would be a complete being only if he knows Good as well. This in spite of his bombast, he carefully refrains from claiming. In the concluding canto of "Conquest of Nature" Adam had pleaded before God in extenuation that earth cannot be conquered unless we fall into its trap. Adam, in order to survive and to enable his return to God, had to taste the earth, but there was no such compulsive urgency for Satan. This is why this claim that to have awakened man to self consciousness, inspired human actions and having "supped full of horrors" to be a fuller being than Gabriel, rings false. It is true that in this poem (in sharp contrast to "Conquest of Nature" where he strikes a theatrical and flashy pose) Satan is invested with a dignity and stature which recall Coleridge's remarks on Milton's Satan. Yet Macbeth had far more dignity than either of the Satans, but no one believes that Shakespeare intended to make, or in fact did make Macbeth an example to be imitated or even admired. In fact both Milton and Iqbal (Iqbal to the extent of this poem only and Milton generally) conceived Satan not as a rag-tag and bobtail Satan with horns of tinsel and buck teeth of bone. They conceived him fittingly as a powerful personage. Except that Iqbal saw in him a subject

for irony more than terror and Milton treated him as God's adversary, perhaps too high an estate for Satan himself to maintain for very long. Iqbal's famous line in *Payam i Mashriq* in the poem entitled "Paradise" (Bihisht) has often been quoted to prove that Iqbal too treated Satan as God's adversary,

Live not in a world so blind of taste
That it has God but no Satan

This in fact refers to the simple Islamic tradition that fullness of being can be attained only when one knows both good and evil. There is a famous incident of an early 20[th] Century Sufi, Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanavi, that when a disciple expressed to him his anxiety that he was subject to numerous temptations, Thanavi pointed towards a wall and said that it feels nothing and gains nothing. Thus Satan as principle of Evil is necessary so that temptation may befall man and he may overcome it.

Dr. Johnson was perhaps the first important critic to complain that there was a want of human interest in *Paradise Lost*. That this view was ill-founded most of us would agree now. Only, what constitutes "human interest" in the poem could be debated. To my mind the human interest of the poem is not that Milton pitifully exposes himself as a diabolist and thus joins the ranks of us frail humans not to be tested against reason. Otherwise, the poem is a human document in every sense of the word. In his preface to the Longmans edition, Fowler has successfully argued against Waldock and Empson that Milton wrote an unchristian poem in spite of himself. Fowler also asserts that the poem has logical structure—that is, its logic coheres. I do not think this can be shown to hold at all points but there is no doubt that questions like whether Satan or God is hero of the poem are meaningless. Milton may not have created a personal God as Fowler claims, nor a personal Satan as Empson and others have claimed, but he certainly created a Satan and a God who were larger than life, which is more than can be said of most of us, fettered as we are by our basically anthropomorphic conceptions of God.

Iqbal made no attempt to create an epical Satan, or even an Adam. It is therefore, unfair to isolate a few poems or lines for comparison with Milton. As I have been at some pains to explain, Satan does not loom so large in Iqbal's theogony. But for a handful of occasions, Iqbal conceives Satan in plain black and white and does not give him true poetic stature. Under no pressure to rationalize, Iqbal is not much preoccupied with the Fall. Even his famous observation in the *Reconstruction* that the Fall is "man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream nature with a throb of causality in one's own being" leaves Satan entirely out of the reckoning and is borrowed from St. Augustine without much critical examination. Cleanth Brooks quotes from Augustine's *City of God* and states that "self consciousness" was the "knowledge conferred by the act of plucking and eating the fated apple". Iqbal makes use of this argument to further his thesis of self-awareness but scarcely looks at Satan whom he generally treats in a conventional manner. His long Urdu poem in *Armughan-e Hijaz* ("Offering to *Hejaz*") entitled *Iblis ki Majlis-e Shura* (The Parliament of Satan) contrasts rather poorly with the parliament of devils in P. L. II, 1-505 mainly because Milton shows greater dramatic sense, and Iqbal for all his high rhetoric, shows Satan only as a general given to bombast and delusions of grandeur. Iqbal's Satan alternately raves and plots like a demagogic terrorist and shows up bloodless against Milton's "grand infernal peers" and "their mighty paramount" (P.L. II, 507-508). Iqbal's other poems show that he had some talent for drama. That he held it here in abeyance would perhaps indicate that to him the subject was not big enough. At any rate, but for the two dialogues, Iqbal's Satan remains a shadowy or a flashy figure, depending on what poem you happen to be reading. Milton's Satan stands everywhere supreme as a creature of the imagination.

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Part-II

Review Articles
Iqbal Studies

A Complaint Against Khushwant Singh's "Complaint and Answer"

I am afraid I am going to come down rather heavily on this book. In order to soften the blow, let me first say what I like about it. But the trouble is that there is not much that I like. Anyway, here are the points that appeal to me. This is a trilingual edition: the original Urdu has been reproduced by photo offset from the centenary edition of Iqbal's collected Urdu translation, and a Devanagari transliteration. Thus each page contains just one stanza; this makes for easy reading. The Urdu calligraphy is good (no credit to the publisher); the Devanagari type-face is pleasing (credit to the publisher); while the English type-face is as good as that of any Oxford publication (credit to the Indian printer). The production values of the whole book are excellent. The translator greatly admires Iqbal and the Urdu language, and he is not happy with the extant (admittedly bad) translations of the two poems he has chosen to translate. He has brought to bear on his task a fervour, a vigour and a devotion which are truly commendable. The translator has taken pains to track down the allusions to Islamic history and learning with which the poems abound. He has done some background reading on Iqbal, and provided some useful factual information. He has got made a literal translation, in that he has very often expanded the original lines, endeavouring (but mostly failing) to make their sense more clear.

But, has Khushwant Singh produced a good translation, or even a good poem in English? Is he competent to do a translation from Urdu? The answer to both these questions, I

am afraid, has to be a firm "No". It would need a book of almost the same length as the one under review to point out and discuss the numerous blemishes that mark this book. Broadly speaking, there are errors of fact, errors of Urdu language comprehension, errors of Urdu poetry comprehension, and errors of English. I will give just a few examples. I will not divide my comments under the different headings that I have mentioned above, but will do a random sampling, page by page.

Singh says (p. 16): "The bulbul which in real life only emits an unmusical chirp ...is made into a nightingale...in order to endow it with a melodious voice..". The bulbul does not emit an unmusical chirp, as Singh can easily verify by stepping out into his garden; and a bulbul is not made into a nightingale; there are no nightingales in Urdu poetry. We are told (p. 23) that Iqbal had "an affair with 'Atiya Zaidi, a young uninhibited girl..". It is most doubtful if Iqbal had "an affair" with Atiya (whose surname,. incidentally, was Faizi, not Zaidi,), and her lack of inhibition is a mere invention. On page 24, Iqbal's daughter's name is given as Munawarah, instead of Munira. On the same page, we are informed that "a few days before the end" Iqbal wrote "a verse in Persian lamenting his own departure". In fact, what Iqbal wrote was not a lament "on his own departure", but a dignified, melancholy poem which says that there may or may not be another poet and seer like him to finish what he had set out to do. Very loosely translated, the four line poem is something like this:

The music which has gone away, it may return, or it may not;
A breeze from Hijaz may blow, or it may not.
The days of this faqir are done;
Another knower of secrets may come, or he may not.

In his introduction to the "Shikwa", Singh says (p. 25) that it is one of Iqbal's most controversial compositions: as passionately lauded by its many admires as it has been criticized by others". I do not know which of Iqbal's students

have "passionately lauded" the "Shikwa" or even the "Jawab". Except for a very recent defence of the poems by the Pakistani critic Salim Ahmad on rather chauvinistic grounds, I am not aware of any notable critic of Iqbal "passionately" admiring the poems. In fact, informed literary opinion has always held the two poems in low esteem, and assigned them no place in Iqbal's development as a poet or a thinker. The poems evoked warm response among the Muslims for non-literary reasons; literary critics never thought much of them. So there has hardly been any controversy about them. Singh further declares (p. 25) that the "Shikwa" "reveals a not-too-veiled contempt for non-Muslims, particularly Hindus. "Shikwa" may be regarded as the first manifesto of the two-nation theory..". If dead men can turn in their graves, Iqbal must be writhing in his. Singh's conclusion that the poem expresses contempt for non-Muslims, especially Hindus, is based on a misreading of certain lines (more about which later). To see this poem, which is at best a populist expression of Indian Muslims' frustrations at having been relegated to the background on the national scene, as the two-nation theory in embryo, is to miss the point completely. Both the poems are verbose, flabby-sentimental, simplistic, and on the whole second rate, though occasionally brilliant. They are not political, but historical and theological statements. They are based on a populist interpretation of the history of Islam which, quite naturally, soothed Indian Muslims, and also urged them to action. But the action which the two poems urge is not political, it is essentially religious and moral.

I have said that Singh's translation shows errors of Urdu language and Urdu poetry comprehension. By the former I mean that he does not know accurately enough the meaning of many words; by the latter I mean that he is not aware of many concepts and conventions that govern most Urdu poetry of the classical type, of which these two poems are generally bad examples. Both of his failures are evident in the very first stanza of the "Shikwa". He translates *kyun ziyan-kar banun* as "why must I forever lose". *ziyan-kar* means "one who acts for one's own or somebody else's loss or harm". Thus, the

protagonist here is blaming himself and not fate, as the translation suggests. Then, *Main bhi koi gul hun ki Khamosh rahun* is translated: "...am I as dumb as a flower? Must I remain silent?" This shows misapprehension of the concept of *gul* (the rose or any other flower) in Urdu poetry. The *gul* (the beloved) remains unresponsive to the wailing of the bulbul (the lover) not because it (the *gul*) is "dumb", but because it is hard-hearted. To render the unresponsiveness of the *gul* as "dumbness" betrays not only ignorance but also bad taste. Again, in the last line of this stanza, the Persian phrase *Khakam ba dahan* has been translated as "dust fills my mouth". Actually, this phrase is used as a kind of curse on oneself—an expression of apology when one says something impertinent or sacrilegious. It is subjunctive in mood and must always be translated as "may there be dust/ash in my mouth".

On page 30 (stanza three) we find *maujud*, *azal* and *zat i qadim* (all of which are metaphysical mystical concepts) translated as "primal from the beginning of time". *Maujud* means here "that which has real existence (as opposed to non-existence". *Zat i qadim* means "the being which has existed since eternity, therefore, since before Time, and will continue to exist eternally". (*Qadim* is one of the properties of God.) *Azal* means "eternity without beginning". By translating all this as "primal from the beginning of time," Singh implies that God is sempiternal, and not eternal. This not only corrupts the sense, but also violates all the concepts from which the sense flows. In the fifth line of this stanza, the protagonist uses a clever verbal device to mean something opposed to the apparent sense. The line is *ham ko jami 'atikhatir ye parishani thi*. Here *jami 'atikhatir* means "the heart's satisfaction, a satisfaction which results when the heart is not torn apart by divers fears and anxieties;" *parishani* (which colloquially means worry) actually means "being scattered". This is linked with the preceding line where the protagonist says (Singh's translation): "If there were no breeze, how could the rose have spread its scent?" In other words, this scatteredness–wandering from land to land to spread God's message– is seen

as the heart's satisfaction. Singh botches up the whole metaphor by translating the line as: "We your people were dispersed, no solace could we find...". (By the way, the actual line has nothing for "Your people", which Singh has introduced, tautologically, to fill out the meter. Such tautologies abound in the translation and give the impression that the actual poems are weaker than they are. Translating downward is a greater fault than translating upward.)

A similar failure of comprehension occurs in stanza thirteen (p. 40) where *safha i dahr* (which here means "the face of the world") is translated as "the pages of history" and *batil* (which means "Untruth" as a concept, as opposed to "Truth") as "the smear of falsehood". Thus, a line which says that the protagonist and his people erased untruth from the face of the world reads, "we blotted out the smear of falsehood from the pages of history," and implies that they re-wrote past history and removed from the archives what they thought was false!

In stanza twenty-two (p. 48), Singh assumes that the word *pesha* has its usual sense of "profession," while actually here it means "practice or habit". Similarly, *butgari* has been used here to mean "idolatry" and not "idol-making". Therefore, *butgari pesha kiya* should be translated: "Did we adopt idolatry?" The third line of this stanza has been corrupted beyond recognition. The line means: "Did we give up love, or the frenzy that it causes in the head?" Singh translates: "Did we forsake love because of the anguish with which it is fought?" ("Fought" may be a typographical error for "fraught," but the translation still does not at all say what the original says.)

In stanza twenty-three (p. 49) there are errors of comprehension and translation, of greater or lesser magnitude, in the first three of the six lines. In line one Singh misunderstands *ada* ("style, manner") to mean *ada'igi* ("way of articulation or expression"), and gratuitously adds the unpleasant, copy word "blandishments". A line which simply means, O.K., we grant that love has no longer the same style" ('*ishq ki khair wo pahli si ada bhi na sahi* has been made

emotionally pulpy and semantically gross :

Our love may not be what it was, nor told with the same blandishments;...

In the second line, Singh misinterprets *taslim o riza. Taslim* means "surrendering, accepting"; *riza* means "endeavouring, or even vying, to please". (The Urdu original itself is somewhat faulty, but has been made faultier in translation,) Together they would mean: "to surrender/accept willingly in an endeavour to please". Singh mistranslates:

We may not tread the same path of submission,
nor the same way give consent.

It would be impossible for a Muslim to think in terms of "giving consent" to God's will. Islam has no concept of man consenting to the will of God. God does what he wills.

In the third line, the failure of comprehension is due to Singh not appreciating a very slight syntactical complexity. He reads *muztarib dil* as an independent phrase, making ("restless") a part of the subject, and translates:

Our hearts are troubled, their compass needles
from Mecca may have swerved,...

Actually *muztarib* is a part of the verbal phrase. Thus, the prose-order of the line is: *dil sifat i qibla-numa muztarib bhi na sahi*. And the line simply means: "our hearts are no doubt not restless like the compass needle". The compass needles which Singh sees as having swerved from Mecca are not there at all.

I don't think I need to say more about the accuracy of the translation. But since all my remarks so far have been confined to the "Shikwa alone", let us have a look at the "Jawab" as well. Mistranslation in a *ghazal* is deplorable, but is not so harmful to the poem as is mistranslation in a *nazm*. A *ghazal* is a bunch of discrete *ash'ar* (loosely, "couplets") which are almost never linked each to each in meaning; whereas in a *nazm*, all the lines are more or less closely connected to each other; thus, one mistranslation can mar the sense of a large

chunk of the poem, if not the entire poem. For example, in the "Shikwa" itself, the fourth line of stanza twenty-seven (p. 54) is: *hind ke dair nashinon ko musalman karde* ("These temple-dwellers of India, make them Muslim".) Now *dairnashin* literally means "those who sit in temples," but here the phrase refers to the Muslims themselves, and not the Hindus. According to the protagonist, the Indian Muslims have lost the quality of Islam, and he prays that God change their hearts and make them true Muslims again. Singh translates: "Convert to Islam India's millions who still in temples dwell". Thus the poem is made to appear not as a plaint of the Muslims who feel neglected and unloved by God, but as a prayer for conversion of the "infidels". Perhaps it is misinterpretations such as these which have led Singh to conclude that these poems have the two-nation theory in its embryonic stage. There is nothing in the poems which could support such a view. In fact, the poems could be seen as a warning to the Indian Muslims that they have forfeited, and will continue to forfeit, God's favours if they do not mend their ways. They are told that they cannot pretend to be God's chosen people just because they claim to be the followers of the Prophet; God's bounty comes to those who deserve it; "Muslim" or "infidel" in the traditional sense has no meaning for God. What has meaning is true submission, and the qualities of truth, justice, modesty, fortitude, ceaseless strife and action, fear of God rather than the fear of death, in fact all that distinguishes the perfect man from the imperfect man. In the "Jawab", God is made to declare unequivocally (Singh's translation, p. 66):

You are not the clay of which another Adam could be made.
If there were one deserving, we'd raise him to regal splendour,
To those who seek, we would unveil a new world of wonder.

And again (Singh's translation, p. 72):

From time eternal we the Creator made justice our sovereign rule;
To infidels who behaved as Muslims we gave heaven's gifts

as prize.

So the poems are not documents to division, political or cultural. They are just second rate poems expressing the frustration of the Indian Muslims around the first decade of this century and exhorting them (to use a trite phrase, for the poems are trite) to first deserve, then desire the favours of God.

Let me now revert to the dismal litany of mistranslations. I will randomly pick some from the "Jawab". The first line of stanza four (p. 64) has the words *Shokh* ("impertinent") and *barham* ("angry"). Singh mistranslates *Shokh* as "proud" and *barham* as "rails against". So a fairly crisp line, which says, "So impertinent that he is angry at God too;" becomes: "He even rails against Allah, he has become so proud; ..". (Whatever little effect of the original this vapid line could have reproduced, is lost by putting a semi-colon, instead of an exclamation point, at its end.) The third line has *'alim i kaif* ("the knower of sensations; the knower of abstract things") and *Dana i rumuz i kam* ("one who is wise about the finer points of quantity; the knower of material or non-abstract things"). All this is destroyed by the translation: "He knows about things, their quantity and quality;..". The point is that man is being described as having the knowledge of two different orders of things, and not about two aspects of the same order of things.

Misunderstanding the meaning of *shokh* in stanza four (p. 64) has led Singh to another, more flagrant, mistranslation of this word in stanza five (p. 65) where *Shokh zaban* ("sharp-tongued") becomes "cunning" and this quality of "cunningness" is seen as being produced in the protagnonist's tongue by his "impassioned heart". The line, *kis qadar Shokh zaban hai dil i divana tera*, simply says: "How sharp-tongued is your frenzied heart!" Singh renders it meaningless by saying: "What cunning your impassioned heart has lent your tongue!"

In stanza fourteen (p. 74), the idiom *kuch tumhen paas nahin* ("you have no regard for..".) has literally and ludicrously been translated as "nothing with you is left". So the line which

simply says, "You have no regard for Muhammad's message", becomes in Singh's version: "Of Muhammad's message nothing with you is left". A similar misunderstanding of idiom produces a similar mistranslation in stanza fifteen (p. 75). Here the idiom *ke dam se* ("by virtue of") is translated "by the breath of," creating an unintended comic effect. The comic vein continues in the next stanza (p. 76) where *sahib* ("possessor") is taken to mean the British Sahib and translated as "gentleman". The line is: *ya'ni vo sahib i ausaf i hijazi na rahe* ("...that is, those possessors of Hejazi qualities are no more". There are no "noble gentleman" here. Yet Singh translates: "The likes of noble Hejazi gentlemen are no longer there".

Two stanzas in the "Shikwa", and two also in the "Jawab", end with Persian instead of Urdu lines. Let us look at one example of what Singh has done with the Persian. Admittedly, the lines in question are somewhat fuzzy in the original Persian too, but the translation misses whatever little point they have. In the "Jawab", stanza eighteen (p. 78), Singh misunderstands the Persian polysemic pronoun represented by the letter *sin*. In the lines in question, it means, "it was his, i.e., it was his nature or his lot". The lines are:

Khud gudazi name i kaifiyat i sahbayash blood
Khali az Khsh shudan surat i minayash bud
A rough and literal translation would be:
It was his to be melting in himself, like the state of moisture in wine;
It was his to be empty of his own self, like the wine jar.

The first line is an indirect allusion to Ghalib where he says that his wine is so strong as to melt the glass. Contrary to that, Iqbal imagines the frothing of the wine to indicate that it is melting (i.e., has a heart melted by the fire of love). By being "empty of his own self" Iqbal means "surrender of the self" and not unselfishness in the conventional sense. Singh translates :

His self-effacement was the essence as liquid contents are of liquor

As a goblet empties out, emptying himself for others was his pleasure.

The preceding four lines mention truthfulness, fearlessness, justice, modesty, and bravery, in that order. It is obvious that "self-effacement, etc". would not be natural in this context.

Stanzas thirty-three through thirty-five of the "Jawab" are especially scarred in translation because Singh misunderstood the link between them and stanza thirty-two. He translates the last two lines of the latter (p. 92) as follows:

With the power of love raise the lowest to triumphant heights
With the name of Muhammad turn the darkness to light.

I do not wish to comment on the tepidity of these lines; what I want to point out is that the "flowers" and the "names" in the next stanza (p. 93) refer to Muhammad, and not to God, as Singh assumes. He translates, "If he were not the flower, no bird song would you hear," and so on, till the end. These stanzas are in fact in praise of Muhammad, and refer to a popular Muslim belief that God created the world only because he wanted to create Muhammad. The translation by Singh becomes not only meaningless, but also sacrilegious from the literalist or fundamentalist point of view, because what the poem says about Muhammad, the translation says about God. (I may hasten to add that I am no literalist nor fundamentalist.)

The translation of the last stanza of the "Jawab" (p. 96) leaves an impression totally different from the original. Where the poet has "love is your sword" (*'ishq hai Shamshir teri*), Singh says, "...the sword of love in your land". Where the poet says, "my homeless one, "Singh says, "servant of God;" where the poet says, "your vicegerency is throughout the world," Singh would have us believe that he has said, "the leadership of the world is at your command". Where the poet says, "that which is not God," Singh says, "all except God;" where the poet says, "what you plan will become your destiny," the translation says, "your destiny is to grasp what you aspire".

Where the poem says, "what is this world? Even the Tablet and Pen of fate are yours," the translation informs us, "What is this miserable world? To write the world's history, pen and tablet we offer you".

All this would be tolerable, if not acceptable, if Singh had produced a reasonable English poem. He is fully aware of the problems of translating from what he calls "oriental" verse in a European language (p. 15). He also disclaims any pretence to Urdu scholarship. Heavily handicapped as he was, his greatest asset was his command of English, an asset for which he is rightly admired. But it seems he remembers no English poetry except the soggy verse of Edwin Arnold, whose pale shade looms large over the translations. By translating into loose hexameter couplets, Singh has let himself be bogged down by elaborate, unnecessary padding for the sake of meter and rhyme. By trying to imitate a language that had become dated even in Victorian times, he has "writ no language". A piece of English writing directed toward those who have little or no Urdu and whose mother-tongue is English, should at least make itself understood as English. Yet the translation is hardly intelligible even to people like me. And this is not only because of mutilation in translation, but also because of plain, bad "poetic" English. Singh seems to have no idea of the language being used in English poetry today. And by "the language of English poetry today" I do not mean the highly wrought, boldly creative and unorthodox language used by a poet like Ted Hughes. I simply mean a language which refuses to accept archaic, turgid, sentimental or coy expressions as the current coinage of English poetry. Most of what Singh has produced is simply not good English, either in terms of idioms or of "poetic" language. Let me give some examples and try to say what is wrong with them.

1. *Inversion.* While Urdu syntax does not suffer much by inversion, and indeed seems to thrive on it, the English mode is alien to inversion, and modern English poets have always regarded it as a sign of poor poetic skill, if not of bad taste and

have used it only– if ever– for comic effects. Exigencies of rhyme and meter have made Singh practice inversion on a large scale. This not only creates a cutesy effect but also often makes for unnecessary obscurity. At first reading, a line like "*Filled with the wine of faith, like goblets round we went.*" (p. 39) seems to mean that "round" is not an adverb, modifying "went", but an adjective, qualifying "goblets". Similarly a line like "*Neither rhyme nor reason has Your displeasure, what does it mean?* (p. 47) is liable to be misconstrued to mean that "rhyme" and "reason," and not "displeasure", are the subject of "has". Again, in the following line: "*His name is the tent pole that the canopy of heaven sustains*". (p. 93) the immediate impression is that the "tent-pole" is sustained by "the canopy of heaven," and not the other way round.

2. *Bad English:* One cannot believe that a stylist of Khushwant Singh's level would not be aware of the grammatical holes in his translation; it must be the tyranny of rhyme and meter which has made him compromise. But errors which are not directly caused by these constraints—and many are such errors—make one wonder what had got into him when he translated:

Under the shades of glittering sabres Your creed we proclaimed. (p. 33)
How does one justify "under" for "in" and "shades" for "shade"?
Beneath the dragger's (sic) point, we proclaimed Your message true.
(p. 35)

"Beneath the dragger's (presumably, dagger's) point" is meaningless, and also bad translation. One could easily say "at dagger's point", or even possibly "under the point of a dagger". To make matters worse, Singh says "the dagger". (What dagger? one is tempted to ask.)

Heavy weighs the light of dawn, how loathe you are to rise? (p. 69)

"Loathe" could be a typographical error for "loath", but "weighs" here needs a preposition and an object governed by it. (For example: "weighs heavy on you".)

Who love (sic) by selling tombs of their sires are you. (p. 70)

"Love" may again be a typographical error for "live", but the absence of the demonstrative "those" before "who" is indefensible; so is the omission of the definite article before "tombs". In the following line, the first "in" is unidiomatic as well as unpleasantly repetitive. Replacing it with "from" would remove both defects.

What is there to stop you in trading in gods made of stone? (p. 70)

In the following line, "there be" hangs in the air; the conditional clause" beginning "even if" needs a subject to conform with the impersonal pronoun "one". So instead of "*One's speech should be polite even if there be reason to criticize*" (p. 72) Singh should have written "*One's speech should be polite even if one has reason to criticize.*" (This would have removed the heavily archaic "there be" in the bargain.)

The following line has a nonsense phrase "set them wildly free" which is tautological too.

The new civilization, removed all restraints and set them wildly free;.... (p. 83)

In the following line, "dwells by" suggests that "He" lives somewhere nearby, and not in the ocean. Moreover, "the ocean's swell" which is "tossed by the stormy seas" leaves the reader wondering if "ocean's swell" is different from, and outside of, "stormy seas". In addition, he wonders if it is "swell" or the "ocean" which is "tossed".

He dwells by the ocean's swell that's tossed by the stormy seas. (p. 94)

The line is a gross mistranslation too.

3. *Archaisms*. Loosely interpreted, a word or phrase no longer used by educated native speakers except for some special effect is an archaism, even if the dictionary does not designate it so. "Bread and butter" for "livelihood," "kith and kin" for "near relations," "alas" as an expression of regret, "missive" for "letter," are some examples. Strictly speaking, only words or phrases designated as archaic by good dictionaries of current language are archaic. Also, different disciplines have different idioms: a word may be archaic or even obsolete in poetry or criticism, but current in law or history. Singh's translation uses archaisms of both types (italicized in the examples below).

We are like the silent lute whose chords are
All of voice;... (p. 29)
Those who rose against you, against them we turned our ire,... (p. 35)
Hejazis turned to Mecca, kissed the earth and ceased from fray.... (p. 38) ("ceased from fray" is bad English too.)
Where is the affection you showed us in the days of yore? (p. 43)
Alas! not one there was in the garden to hear his lament. (p. 56)
Strong was his sense of justice, no bias did hid (sic) *judgment blight.* (p. 78)
Why tremble at the snorting of the chargers of your foes? (p. 90)

4. *Tautology.* (Note the bolded words or phrases.)
Do you know of anyone, Lord, who then took Your Name? ***I ask***. (p. 31)
Fake gods that men had made, who did break ***and shatter***? (p. 36)
My mind's mirror is studded with many gems ***sparkling bright***; ... (p. 57)
Your tears tremble at the brim and are ready ***to flow***. (p. 65)
Weeds and brambles will be swept out of the garden ***with a broom***; ... (p. 86)

(Also, the original has nothing to suggest "swept out, "much less a broom.)

His name is the tent pole that the canopy Of heaven sustains. (p. 93)

(In order to appreciate the tautology better, amend the line as follows: His name is the tent-pole of heaven's canopy.)

5. *Mixed or inappropriate metaphors*. It is hard to formulate rules for metaphor making. In fact, one of the complaints that some philosophers of language and some metaphysicians make against metaphor is that there can be no manual for metaphor making. Still, the fact that mixed metaphors and inappropriate metaphors are generally bad has always been recognized. A mixed metaphor means joining two metaphors which are independently valid, but are derived from two different premises. An inappropriate metaphor is one which seeks to establish correspondence where there is none, or where the figurative value established is ineffectual or too little. Here are some examples from Singh's translation.

My mind's mirror is studded with many gems sparkling bright; ... (p. 57)

Apart from being a gross mistranslation, the line suffers due to the mixed metaphor of the mind's mirror being studded with jewels, for a jewel-studded mirror will have no reflective power.

The aged vault of heaven heard. There is someone somewhere, said he. (p. 62)

The "aged vault of heaven" is again a mistranslation, and the mixed metaphor is that while "aged" is appropriate to a vault, hearing is not. "The vault of heaven heard" could be acceptable because the anthropomorphism of "aged" would not be there to cause confusion.

Its breast is full of melodies that are still tempest-tossed. (p. 55)

The melodies are in the breast, not in the tempest. So if anything is to be "tempest-tossed," it should be the breast. A

curious mixing of metaphors, this. It is also a mistranslation.

Who made time-serving the measure of your actions? (p. 74)

Time-serving is a style of conduct; it can be a symptom of some weakness or fault, but not a "measure" of someone's actions.

Your thoughts are flames that dispel tomorrow's shades and make them bright. (p. 88)

Apart from being an enormous mistranslation, the line suffers from the following defects: 1, if thoughts are flames that dispel "shades", they cannot make them bright, for the shades are already dispelled; 2. there is only one tomorrow, so it can have only one shade, not "shades"; 3. "shades" is incorrect in this context, it should have been "shadows" or at least "shade;" 4. "tomorrow's shades" is yet another mixed metaphor; 5. The tautology is obvious.

Strong was his sense of justice, no bias did hid (sic) judgement blight. (p. 78)

"Blight is an inappropriate metaphor for the function of "bias".

A word about the Devanagari transliteration. Here again, Khushwant Singh seems to have relied on slipshod advice. A few examples of incorrect transliteration will suffice.

Jami'at for *jam'iyat* (p. 30); *yurup* for *yurap*, the Urdu pronounciation of "Europe" (p. 33); *sarkashi* for *sarkash-o* (p. 61); *'alam* for *'alim* (p. 64); mursil for mursal (p. 68).

To conclude, this is not a book that I can recommend with a clear conscience. Strong words, but Khushwant Singh is an important and influential writer. The sins of the great are always judged more severely than those of the small.

IQBAL—A SELECTION OF THE URDU VERSE: TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Iqbal—A Selection of the Urdu Verse: Text and Translation. Translated by D. J. Matthews. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; 1993. X, 289 pp. £ 12.

One Must Admire the industry and the literary discrimination of D. J. Matthews, a scholar whom all of us know and respect as co-editor of *An Anthology of Classical Urdu Love Lyrics: Text and Translations* (London: 1972). The expectations that were aroused in me on seeing his new book, an advanced students' handbook and anthology of Iqbal, were high and pleasant, based on my previous views about Matthews's work. If I am now disappointed, these high expectations are largely to blame. But then, such expectations were not unreasonable. In the 1972 anthology, all the poems were scanned accurately and their metres described correctly. In the present book, I find a scansion that should have gone - -/ ~ --/~ --/~ - described as - -· - / - - · -/ - - · · /- - (p. 149). Even if we presume that the fourth syllable of the first foot (as described by Matthews) is shown as long due to a typographical error, there is nothing– not even our good opinion of Matthews– that can make us believe that any foot in an Urdu metre could end with two short syllables. The foot division is not just wrong: it couldn't have been made by anyone who has knowledge of Urdu prosody.

On page 150 we find a scansion that should correctly be - - · / - · - - / - - · / - · - - described as- - · -/· - -/· - · -/- -. The author

forgets that his configuration takes the metre away from *Muzari'* and makes it into a false *Rajaz*. The same error is repeated on page 151. (In both cases, however, the metre is correctly identified as *Muzari'*.) On page 152, a configuration that should be - - ‐ /‐ - ‐ - / ‐ - - has been shown as- --/‐ - ‐ -/- -. The metre of poems 19 and 26 is *Munsarih*; both times it has been identified as *Rajaz* (pp. 173 and 184). And so on.

At this point I hear the voice of my conscience suggesting that I'm perhaps picking nits. Should I not examine the larger issues? For example, what image of Iqbal does this book convey? Does he come across as the great poet and great thinker that we are informed (Introduction, p. 3) he was? What are the issues, then, that his poetry addresses? With what ideas does it engage? What are the literary strategies that he adopts? Where does he stand in the Urdu poetic tradition? What new ground, if any, did he break in Urdu poetry? These and many such questions that should have merited David Matthews's attention are not even raised. All that we have are somewhat hasty and certainly over-broad generalizations, like "The Persian influence [on Iqbal] was so great that not infrequently an Urdu verse may be rendered into Persian merely by substituting the third person singular form of the verb 'to be' *hai* by *ast*, which conveniently scan in the same manner" (p. vii). While one may disregard the fact that *ast* and *hai* do not always scan the same way, one still wonders if such a narrow situation obtains "not infrequently" even in the poetry of Ghalib, which is more Persianized than that of Iqbal. One also wonders whether Persian is not to Iqbal's Urdu what Arabic was to Hafiz's Persian. Hafiz, as we well know, has a predilection for inserting Arabic phrases, *misra's*, and even full *shi'rs*, into his Persian ghazals. Rumi does the same in his Masnavi. So by throwing an occasional—and to be sure, not major—bit of Persian into his Urdu, was Iqbal consciously paying homage to the Persian language, or was he merely acting out a role suggested by his great predecessors? Iqbal has a lot of Arabic too, particularly Qur'anic references, in his Persian, and also in his Urdu. The reason for this could be his

love of Islam and its Prophet, or his admiration of Arabic, or his erudition, or all of these. Discussions of such non-central matters should not, in my view, find place in brief, simplifying introductions of the kind attempted here.

The reference to the alleged Persian influence on Iqbal has been brought in, I suspect, merely in order to justify including in this volume "a short appendix outlining the grammar of Iqbal's Persian" (p. vii). Before we go on to examine the worth and value of the appendix in question, we might stop and ask ourselves where the signpost "Iqbal's Persian" is supposed to lead us. Are we to understand that there are many kinds of Persian, and Iqbal's is one of them? Or does this mean that Iqbal's Persian was different from that of, say, Hafiz or Ghalib? Or should we believe that Iqbal's Persian was "archaic" (or maybe "modern") and had a different grammar? Later on (p. 195) we are informed that "Iqbal's Persian is not the modern language of Iran, but reflects that of the classical poets of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. [...] Substantially, however, classical and modern Persian do not differ greatly from each other. [...] Iqbal's verse would generally be perfectly comprehensible to the present day Iranian." If so, why insert an appendix outlining the grammar of "Iqbal's Persian"?

Now a brief look at the grammar itself. On page 196 we are introduced to the *izafat*, the functions of which have been limited to merely two: to indicate the possessive or the adjectival. So what about the descriptive sense, like *shahr i dehli* (the city of Delhi), or the inverted-descriptive, like *abju* (*ju i ab*, stream of water), or the genetic like *Bu 'Ali i Sina* (Bu 'Ali, son of Sina), or the qualitative like *ahl i dil* (he/she/they who have a heart), and so on? On page 197 we are told, "Persian verbs have two stems: *Present and Past* " (!). The author goes on to say that *khar* is the present (!!) stem of the verb *kharidan* (to buy) and that the infinitive is formed by adding an to the past stem (!!!). At this point, I am rendered speechless, for I have lost all the myriad Persian infinitives that

I'd always been taught to regard as *masdar* (occurring from the beginning, that from which things start; hence, the original forms) which are the source of other, finite forms.

Rather than losing myself in marginal issues, let me return to the main questions. Does this book present any kind of image of Iqbal as a great poet? One of the ways to attempt such a presentation would have been to choose poems which the critical opinion of the culture in which they were produced has consistently regarded as great. Seen from this point of view, the inclusion of long poems that are largely sentimental ("Shikwa"), sententious ("Valida Marhuma ki Yad men") or more or less wish-fulfilling rather than visionary and history-based ("Tula -e Islam") seems to be misleading, or wasteful, or both. For the very same space could have been used for including much greater poems like "Zauq-o Shauq," "Sham' aur Sha'ir," the grand qasida-like poem in imitation of Sana'i (*sama' sakta nahin pahna i fitrat men mera sauda*), extracts from "Mihrab Gul Afghan ke Afkar," and many of the short, dramatic poems like "Jibril o Iblis" that would be the pride and glory of any poet.

It is hard to see why a selection like the present one—short as it is—would choose to deal with poems of a local, passing interest. I grant that even the weaker poems of Iqbal are often better than the best of nearly all his contemporaries, but I truly don't see why Prof. Matthews should stuff the student's gullet with second-rate, stale stuff from a poet who is perfectly able to supply some of the finest poetry produced in India in this century.

These reservations notwithstanding, I am glad to affirm that the translations of the poetry generally succeed in their objective: each is "a parallel English translation, which has been made as literal as possible, without, however, forcing the English syntax" (p. 8). The book "is intended for those who have a reading knowledge of Urdu and who would like to become better acquainted with the works of Iqbal" (p. vii). I would say that the translations generally do even better: they

read like good English texts in their own right. Here is a sample from the poem "Khizr-e Rah" (p. 59, opening lines):

One night on the bank of the river I was lost in my vision.
In the recess of my heart I concealed a world of anxiety.
The night grew ever more silent; the wind was gentle; the river flowed softly. My eyes wondered if this was a river or a picture of water.
As a little baby sleeps in its cradle, somewhere, in the depths, the wave was restless, drunk in dreams.
The birds in their nests were captives to the magic of the night. The dim stars were prisoners of the spell of the moonlight.
Then suddenly I see Khizr, the messenger who measures the world, in whose old age the colour of youth is bright as the dawn.
He is saying to me: 'Oh seeker of the secrets of eternity, if the eye of your heart is opened, the destiny of creation will be unveiled.'

This reads very well, and the sense of the poem is more or less preserved. But I still have my differences with it: some, which relate to choosing a more or less literal word or phrase from the English to represent the Urdu word or phrase, I'll disregard. For they fall in the area of legitimate choices: for example, should *jahan paima* be "he who measures the world" (Matthews, and quite correct and literal) or "he who travels the world"? Instead, I want to point out what I consider serious mistranslations in the above-quoted text.

In the first line, we have *mahv i nazar*, which means "gazing" or "looking intently." I would be very loath to render it "lost in ... vision". In verse 3, line 2, the Urdu text is *mauj i muztar*. That is, there is an *izafat* connection between *mauj* and *muztar*. Matthews doesn't read the *izafat*, and translates, "The wave was restless, drunk in dreams." Actually, he should have said, "The restless wave was [no longer restless but) lost in sleep." (By the way, I would here prefer "sleep" to Matthews's "dreams"). In verse 5, Matthews translates *paik* as

"messenger." Here it could be much better translated as "runner".

The calligraphy of the Urdu text is pleasing, and has been beautifully transported here from the Lahore edition of 1973. However, that edition, venerable though it is, suffers from some serious typographical and orthographic-stylistic errors. Since Matthews's target reader is the student who has some, though not much, Urdu, I'd have been very happy to see the text entirely debugged. Here are some examples.

Iqbal had an archaic way of writing *mujh-ko* (treating it as one word) as *mujko*. Similarly, he wrote tujh-ko as tujko. This is entirely incorrect, but he seems to have persisted with it in all the editions of his poetry that were published under his supervision. I see no reason for us to perpetuate this anachronism. Or if out of respect to Iqbal we do so, we should make this clear. In the present instance, the unexplained occurrence of *mujko* or *tujko* (pp. 12—13 and passim) is sure to cause misunderstanding about its correctness. Similarly, the calligrapher of the source edition has an inordinate love for using *do-chashmi* he, where current Urdu orthography unequivocally prefers the *ha i havvaz*. Here again, if it wasn't possible for Matthews to effect corrections, he should have stated the correct position in the notes. On page 98, verse 8, line 1, the source edition makes a ludicrous error in printing *gil* as *gul*. The error has been preserved by Matthews; even his translation assumes that the true text is *gull* and he translates accordingly, not realizing that *gul* doesn't make very good sense in the context. Furthermore, the entire second line of the verse in which *gil* occurs, is missing from Matthews's text, making the verse incomprehensible anyway. On page 104, last line, the source edition has *tajdidah* instead of *tajdid* The error is preserved in Matthews.

Ghalib and Iqbal are the two Urdu poets whose names are vaguely familiar to the modern Western reader. I fear that this book will not do as much as we could wish toward deepening that familiarity.

Part-III

Urdu Literature
Literary Themes and History

Part-III

URDU LITERATURE

LITERARY THEMES AND HISTORY

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN URDU LITERATURE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF DELHI

The story of early Urdu consists of a few small events and some large gaps. It also presents the historian with many puzzles whose existence, far less their solutions, had remained unsuspected until quite recently. Although the language must have existed by early eleventh century, it wasn't known by the name "Urdu" before late eighteenth century. Continuous literary activity in the language is not traceable before the fifteenth century. The birth of the language most probably took place in the area around Delhi, which means chunks of territories now in modern Rajasthan, Haryana, and the western part of Uttar Pradesh. Regular literary production in the language began, however, not in Delhi, but in far away Gujarat. From Gujarat it spread to the true South and had many centuries of powerful growth in Gujarat and the Deccan.

No influence of Delhi can be seen on the Urdu literature of Gujarat and Deccan. The main reason for this is that Delhi did not then have any Urdu literature of its own, to influence or be influenced by others. Delhi had long remained a haven for Persian and continued to be so until at least the first half of the eighteenth century. Urdu literature in the mean time continued to flourish elsewhere, and the language over the centuries acquired a number of names: Hindvi/Hindi; Dihlavi; Gujri; Dakani/Dakhani/Dakhini. "Hindustani" also seems to have been used, but not very frequently. Rare instances of the name

being pronounced "Hindui" (from *hindu=Indian*) also are known. "Rekhta" as another name for the language became common in Delhi, along with "Hindi", in the eighteenth century. The language name "Urdu" appeared quite late in the century, but over the next hundred years it outbid other names for the language and is its only name today.

The first known literary writing in Urdu was the product of Mas'ud Sa'd Salman's erudite and prolific mind. Salman (1046-1121), who lived in Lahore and was widely regarded as the greatest Persian poet of the age, is reported to have put together a *divan* in "Hindvi"—Urdu's most popular early name. Nothing of this collection survives, and the earliest indication of its existence even comes a century after Salman, in Muhammad 'Aufi's *Lubab ul Albab*, a biographical dictionary of Persian poets compiled in Sindh around 1220. Three quarters of a century later, Khusrau (1253-1325) wrote a seminal *Dibacha* (Preface) to his divan called *Ghurrat ul Kamal* (1294). In this Preface, Khusrau mentioned Salman's Hindvi divan, and said that he (Khusrau) had also produced, for the delectation of his friends, "a few quires of verse in Hindvi". Unfortunately, almost nothing of Khusrau's Hindvi verse survives.

Thus there was nothing by way of Urdu literature in the two centuries between Salman and Khusrau, and another century had to pass after Khusrau before literary activity in Urdu can be discerned. Owing to the vast geographical spread of the language, and the flux of both time and its speech community, Urdu quickly developed a number of registers: Gujri, "hard", or Sanskrit *tatsam*-and-Telugu influenced Dakani, "soft", or Sanskrit *tadbhav*-and-Braj influenced Aurangabadi Dakani/Hindi, Dihlavi, Murshidabadi, Lakhnavi, and so on. Yet in spite of the great longevity, range and sophistication of the literature in Dakani, it or any other register could not acquire pan-Indian authority and normativity.

By the end of the seventeenth century, Urdu, or Hindi/Hindvi/Dakani as it was then called, had become the koine for the sub-continent. India's greatest modern historian Tara Chand says that over the centuries [before English supervened], "Hindustani", that is "Hindi" with an overlay of Persian [=what is now called Urdu] was the lingua franca for all polite speakers throughout India. The Dihlavi register had by that time already burst its local linguistic boundaries and had become established far into the South, in and around Aurangabad, as that Aurangabadi register of Hindi/Dakani. Now in the eighteenth century this powerful koine, as practiced in Delhi, became the measure and the lodestar against which all other registers were tested.

Ahad Ali Khan Yakta in his *Dastur ul Fasahat* (composed in 1798, with emendations carried out until 1815), and Insha'allah Khan Insha and Muhammad Hasan Qatil in their *Darya-e Latafat* (composed 1807)affirm the supremacy and normativity of Delhi's Urdu. Although none of them came from the South, they did come from different backgrounds and places, and none of them was truly Delhi either. In the South, Muhammad Baqar Agah (1745-1806) of Vellore, the greatest writer of the time in the "hard' dakani mode, also wrote in "Rekhta", confirming thus not only his virtuosity but also the availability of "Rekhta" as a literary medium that far into the South.

The acceptance of the Dihlavi register of Urdu as the pristine, authentic tongue was due in no small measure to one poet: Vali. Variously called Vali Gujrati/Vali Dakani/Vali Aurangabadi, he was born around 1665/7, and died in 1708/9. Vali's language was mutually comprehensible with the Delhi Hindi/Rekhta when he came to Delhi in 1700. There was very little Hindi/Rekhta poetry in Delhi at that time. Much of whatever there was, was in the *rekhta* genre. Rekhta was originally a kind of macaronic verse where a Hindi/Hindvi template was used for grafting Persian vocables onto it, or

there was Persian template with Hindi/Hindvi vocables grafted onto it.

That Vali's example must have shaken the polite society of Delhi out of its Persian-induced hubris is not to be doubted. The persianate Delhi must have been somewhat shocked to realize that Aurangabadi Hindi/Dakani/Rekhta, in the hands of a true poet, was flexible a means of literary production as Persian itself. Whatever doubts remained, must have been blown away 20 years later when Vali's divan arrived in Delhi. Shah Hatim (1699-1783), himself a major bilingual poet in Persian and Hindi/Rekhta was an eyewitness to the frisson, the thrill, the new fire of inspiration that swept through Delhi at that time. As Hatim told Mushafi (1750-1824) later, poetry in Vali's style became the only game in town.

The success story of Dihlavi Urdu must have caused divers kinds discomfort to several sorts of historians. If Delhi and its Empire in the eighteenth century presented an unrelieved scene of decay, corruption and disintegration, how come a new and sophisticated linguistic-literary mode sprang out of such chaos? And how could poor, battered, effete Delhi have had the authority to enforce that mode throughout the vast stretches of the sub-continent? Urdu/Hindi/Rekhta was never the court language in the North. So even that *deus ex machina* could not be implored to provide the solution. Such questions were therefore not asked, and "mainline" historians preferred not to make any observation on the literary-cultural vitality, power and resilience of Delhi in the eighteenth century.

Urdu was not the court language at Lucknow. In fact none of the regional courts that sprang up in the eighteenth century in India had Urdu as the court language, or a language in which official business could be transacted. Tipoo Sultan perhaps did permit the Dakani/Karnataki mode of Hindi along with Kannada, but his short reign ended in tragic defeat, and his example was not followed elsewhere. Persian persisted well

into the twentieth century as the official language at the court of Nizamul Mulk at Hyderabad.

Of course, all courts, whether regional, or the one at Delhi, began to employ Hindi/Rekhta poets from the eighteenth century. This was by way of patronage, and providing sustenance to a favoured subject, and had nothing to do with treating Hindi/Rekhta as a language of the court. However royal interest did help the growth of Hindi/Rekhta in the Dihlavi register. Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748) was a connoisseur of Hindi/Rekhta poetry, and Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806) conducted informal conversations in Hindi/Rekhta. He was also a Hindi/Rekhta poet and prose writer of some distinction. All this naturally lent immense social prestige to the language throughout the sub-continent.

As for those who like to put down– by way of praise or blame– all Urdu as pale imitator of Persian, their dilemma was equally horrible. Delhi liked to see itself as home to Persian, and Khan-e Arzu, the greatest linguist and lexicographer of the eighteenth century, declared in his major work *Musmir* (=Fruit Bearing Tree, circa 1754) that the language of Delhi was Persian, the same as that of the other great Iranian poets of the past, and Delhi's Persian was in fact better than that of other extant Iranian cities for Delhi's register was normative for the entire country.

There is considerable force in Khan-e Arzu's assertion, because the elites of Delhi and many commoners or unlettered people too, were then perfectly fluent in Persian, even literary Persian. Khvaja Nasir Andalib (1696/7-1758/9) was a major Sufi of Delhi. Khan-e Arzu describes him as "not having acquired the knowledge of external disciplines" (*tahsil-e ilm-e zahir na karda*). The saint also occasionally describes himself as "unlettered" (*ummi*). Apparently he knew just enough to write a bit, and nothing more. Yet he composed huge sufistic texts in highly literary and learned Persian; the texts were taken

down to his dictation mostly by his even more famous son and disciple, Khvaja Mir Dard (1720-85). Occasionally, when no amanuensis was to hand, the saint himself did the writing.

Given this background, our Persianate historians held that Urdu poetry in Delhi, if not everywhere else, was bound to be just an appendage of Persian. Yet Delhi, great House of Persian for at least seven centuries, had no tradition of Urdu (=Hindi/Dihlavi/Rekhta) poetry. In other words, Persian alone couldn't provide the fillip that was needed to switch from Persian to Hindi/Rekhta. The great flowering of Hindi/Rekhta/Urdu in Delhi came to be only the Dakani creative impinged upon the admittedly puissant forces that were already in Delhi, like sun dried earth, waiting to be quickened by the warm, welcome, but alien rain.

That Delhi did as much for Urdu literature as all Gujri and Dakani put together, attests to the vast creative urge for Urdu that lay dormant in Delhi, its ear to the ground, keen to descry however dimly the coming of the catalyst which would open up the ground forever. Urdu in Delhi at time was like, as Rumi said in another context:

Deep into the bush– Tigers
Waiting for the command: Come!

"Official" historians find nothing but negative images in the Delhi of the eighteenth century because such a view is on all fours with the colonialist discourse, and let me say so, even Marxist discourse. For did not Marx view the British rule in India as a potent instrument of History which catapulted India into the pre-Industrial society? The actual reality was rather more complex. Certainly the eighteenth century did not view itself as living on the edge of Apocalypse or Armageddon. Instead, it saw itself as a continuation of the ages of Babur and Akbar through Aurangzeb. Wars of succession, temporary failure of the centre to hold, emergence of new alignments, were nothing new to the Indo-Muslim political culture.

Culturally and spiritually, the eighteenth century in India was more vibrant than its predecessor. In the field of Urdu and Persian literature, it was the inheritor and perfector of the "Indian Style" of literary expression which had been fashioned over the centuries alike by Hindu, Indian Muslim,. Iranian, Tajik, Uzbek, and Pathan, and by a variegated host of Indian poets like Kabir and Malik Muhammad Ja'isi who did not write in Urdu or Persian. But for Delhi in the eighteenth century, Urdu literature would have remained locked away in distant places, like the obscure contents of the treasure chests of provincial families.

With eighteenth century Delhi must also lie the credit for introducing, or in fact creating, two new institutions in Urdu literature: the *musha'ira*, and the master *(ustad)* who gave formal or informal instruction in the art of poetry and prose to aspiring or practicing writers *(shagirds)*.

The *musha'ira*, as a formal gathering of poets at a well to do person's, or at another poet's place, does not seem to occur anywhere in the main Islamic lands in the medieval or premodern times. Yet it must have existed in India from around the sixteenth century. Such gatherings must have had an audience, of both poets and non-poets from quite early on, if not from the very beginning. The presence of a poet among the audience would imply that he wasn't regarded as senior enough to recite his poetry at such an assembly. One of the reasons for the musha'ira to have originated in India may be the fact from the sixteenth century, there was greater influx of Persian poets in India than ever before. Persian poets from not only Iran, but also from the Persianate Central Asia migrated, or travelled to India for extended sojourns. Akbar actively promoted Persian at court and in Government, and this must have given an extra fillip to Persian poets from abroad to come to India in search of employment or patronage. These poets, finding many of their profession in the same city, or even at the same court away from home, would have tended to gravitate toward each other

for comparing notes, for conversation, and recitation of their new compositions.

The word *musha'ira* is apparently not a proper Arabic derivative from the root *shin 'ain ra*. The word is also not found in any authoritative Persian dictionary before the early nineteenth century. *Shamsul Lughat* (composed 1804-5, printed 1891) and *Ghias ul Lughat* (composed 1826, numerous printings in the nineteenth century) seem to be the earliest to enter it. While according to the former, the word has an agonistic sense in the context of public recitation of poetry, the latter glosses it as "reciting poetry to one another". The fact that none of the authoritative Persian dictionaries of the eighteenth and earlier centuries recognize it, would suggest that poets of repute did not use this words in their works, regarding it perhaps as spurious, or a neologism. Thus the institution itself could not be very ancient. It was very much in place, however, by early eighteenth century.

When Rekhta/Hindi poetry became popular in Delhi, assemblies of poets of that language too began to take place frequently. However, with characteristic snobbishness, the word used for the Rekhta/Hindi poets' assembly was *murakhita*, an Indianistic (and grammatically illegal) derivative from the Persian *Rekhta*. The "high" word *musha'ira* was thus reserved for the "high" poetry of Persian.

The murakhita, however, soon overtook the Persian-language assemblies in popularity, if not exactly in prestige. The earliest use of the word "musha'ira" denoting an assembly of Rekhta/Hindi poets is in the first divan of Mir (1722-1810), compiled before 1752. We have accounts, or reports, of musha'iras/murakhitas by poets like Sa'adat Yar Khan Rangin (1758-1834/5), Mushafi (1750-1824), and by poets and biographists like Qudratullah Qasim (d. 1811). The Rekhta/Hindi musha'ira soon became a lively place, amenable to agonistic confrontations and rivalries. It was not uncommon

for a poet to be challenged in open assembly to scan a line, or give "authoritative proof" of the correctness of a word or phrase used by him. Qudratullah Qasim, in his *tazkira* called *Majmu'a-e Naghz* (final draft composed around 1806/7) gives us the story of Azim Dihlavi(d. 1806/7), a not very accomplished poet, but much given to self-regard, being challenged by Insha'allah Khan Insha (1756/7-1817) when the former unwittingly mixed two metres in one poem. Tempers ran high, and remained so for a long time. In his tazkira *Nikatush Shu'ara* (circa 1752), Mir tells us about the *musha'iras* at the residence of Khvaja Nasir Andalib, and how the venerated Khvaja delegated to Mir himself the duty of organizing as well as presiding over the *musha'iras*.

There is little doubt that the *musha'ira* helped improve the standard of composition Rekhta/Hindi. From the point of view of the sociology of literary production in a given milieu, an even more important consequence of the spread of the *musha'ira* as a creative, competitive arena was, in Delhi and elsewhere, a phenomenal increase in the number of poets, and the love and praxis of poetry trickling down to the so called lower classes. What F. Schlegel said about the democracy in poetry in another context became quite true in the Rekhta/Hindi poetry from early eighteenth century onward. Qasim's *Majmu'a-e Naghz* lists 693 poets. Khub Chand Zaka's (d. 1846) '*Iyarush Shu'ara* (final draft finished around 1812/3, begun 1798/9) has 949 poets. 'Azamuddaula Sarvar's '*Umda-e Muntaknaba* (begun 1801, final draft may have been prepared much later) gives us information about 996 poets. Not all the poets listed by these authors are from Delhi. Since there is very little Rekhta/Hindi poetry in the North and the East before the eighteenth century, the proliferation of Rekhta/Hindi poets in these territories in the eighteenth century must have owed a great deal to the example of Delhi. Abul Hasan Amrullah Ilahabadi wrote his tazkira called *Masarrat Afza* in 1779-80; one of his stated purposes was to write about poets of the East

not mentioned in the tazkiras produced a few years earlier in Delhi.

Among the professions of poets reported by Qasim are: Husain Bakhsh Bakhshi, clothier *(parcha farosh)*; Madhu Singh Shigufta, ironsmith *(ahan gar)*; Khvaja Hinga, gold lace maker and braider *('ilaqa band)*; Mir Sadiq Ali, elephant keeper *(fil ban)*; Shambhu Nath Aziz, money lender *(mahajan)*; Mir Latif Ali Latif, gemstones broker*(dallal-e javahirat)*; Mughal Ali Mughal, braider and merchant *('ilaqa band va saudagar)*; Badruddin Maftun, cloth merchant *(bazzaz)*; Yakrang, goldsmith *(sunar)*;Muhammad Hashim Sha'iq, tailor*(khayyat)*; Muhammad Arif, darner*(rafu gar)*; Pandit Ganga Das Taskin, brahman (apparently a *purohit)*; Inayatullah aka Kallu, barber *(hajjam)*; Ghulam Nasir, lancer and dresser of wounds *(jarrah)*; Mirza Raja Shankar Nath Haya, nobleman; Maqsud, water carrier; and Shiv Singh Bejan, geomancer *(rammal)*. There is even a sweeper, called Qarin. Let it be noted that some of the above poets are Hindu. Hindus, who had been concentrating on Persian up until the middle of the century, seem to have lost their heart to Rekhta/Hindi by the time its musha'iras became popular in Delhi. As the century progresses, we encounter more and more Hindu names among the Rekhta/Hindi poets. Soon they are joined by Christians, mostly westerners, but also second generation Indians.

Women make their appearance quite early on the literary scene. Contrary to common belief, not all of them came from the "nautch girl" class, though that class did have its representatives. The best and justly the most celebrated woman poet of the century was indeed a dancing girl called Mah Laqa Ba'i Chanda (1768-1820) in the South. A woman of great élan and social prestige in Hyderabad, she had poets writing qasidas in her praise. In Delhi, there was Gunna Begam (d. 1773). Married to Ghaziuddin Khan, Prime Minister to Shah Alam II, she was a poet of substantial elegance, and a person of great beauty, ready wit, and a patron of poets. Then there was

Yasman, housemaid to Insha'allah Khan Insha. Some of her verses rival those of much better known poets.

Women poets attracted the attention of tazkira writers by virtue of their considerable numbers, and the quality of their poetry. *Baharistan-e Naz*, the first tazkira devoted to women poets alone, was published in 1864-5 by Fasihuddin Ranj. It contained accounts of 174 poets, some of whom wrote in Persian. Durga Parshad Nadir published his *Chaman-e Andaz* in 1877; its first edition contained 144 women poets, while in the second (1884), the number went up to 196. In his *Shamim-e Sukhan* (1872-3) Safa Badayuni took care to separate the "professional" women from those who observed "purdah" and were *sharif* by birth and circumstance.

We have seen how Persian was the main, and almost the first language of all the elite and many of the middle classes in Delhi up until the middle of the eighteenth century. However, when Rekhta/Hindi began to tug at the hearts and minds of the poets of Delhi, they turned to it with a zest and verve never seen before or after in the history of Urdu letters. Yet, however much the poetry in Rekhta/Hindi may owe to Persian, it was a different language, and those who wanted to compose in it had no real perspective to determine what was excellent and acceptable as poetry in Rekhta/Hindi. They needed someone to put them through their paces, to give them a surer footing in what was essentially an alien idiom to them. This felt need gave rise to the institution of *ustad* (master) to whom a *shagird* (pupil) could submit his verse and also prose for "correction", and to whom he could defer in matters of idiom, usage, and other finer aspects of the art of composition.

The origin of this system seems to have been unique to Delhi, and to Rekhta/Hindi. Doubtless we hear of an occasional Persian poet being a pupil of a major writer like Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil (1644-1720) or Sirajuddin Ali Khan-e Arzu (1689-1756) in Delhi. Vali himself was a pupil of a Sufi and Persian

poet called Shah Gulshan (1662/3?-1727) and Vali himself is reported to have had a couple of pupils of his own. But the nature of the relationship is not clear in these cases. Vali certainly was not a pupil of Shah Gulshan's in Rekhta/Hindi poetry. He may have learnt some other discipline from him. Similarly, we know of Vali's pupils from indirect sources alone, and it is also possible that he acquired them on his return from Delhi. As far as Persian is concerned, it seems that Bedil and Arzu were consulted but informally, except where Arzu's expertise as linguist and master of literary as well as colloquial Persian was made use of by other poets. Arzu certainly was the ustad of some of the earliest Rekhta/Hindi poets in eighteenth century Delhi.

In Urdu, the ustad-shagird institution very soon became a commonplace of the literary environment. Protocols, unwritten but fairly strong, were in place by about the middle of the eighteenth century. For example, the ustad need not have been much older than the shagird, but must have been someone with a big reputation. One did not change ustads casually. Those who changed ustads without a proper reason, or due to their temperament not being suitable to the ustad, were not admired. Often the new ustad would refuse to accept the pupil, unless the matter had been run by the previous ustad and his concurrence obtained. Payment to the ustad for services rendered was not obligatory, but expected. Women also had access to the ustad. Mah Laqa Ba'i Chanda's ustad was Sher Muhammad Khan Iman (d. 1806/7). Hayatunnisa Haya, a daughter of Shah Alam II, was the shagird of Shah Nasir (1760/61?-1838).

The ustad never solicited shagirds, and had full right not to accept a given person as shagird, either due to lack of ability in the prospective shagird, or lack of inclination on the part of the ustad. Mir tells us in his autobiography of Raja Jugal Kishor, a rich patron of poets who desired to appoint Mir his ustad. Not finding the Raja's poems "worthy of correction", Mir turned

him away, having "scrawled a line across most" of the Raja's verses. Mir was practically destitute at that time, and would not have been more than thirty-five years of age. His refusal to accept the Raja as shagird must have meant hardship and maybe loss of future patronage from others as well. The fact that Mir had no hesitation to turn down the Raja reflect light on the value Mir placed on the ustad's calling and also the station of the poet: not everybody could become a poet, poetry was not a class privilege. It was a matter of talent. There are suggestions that sometimes the ustad composed virtually all the poetry that went under the rich or powerful shagird's name. But no one has ever proved anything. Instances, however, of the ustad giving away to, or "bestowing on" a shagird a whole verse or ghazal are not unknown.

The ustad-shagird institution thrived and became widespread in a short time because it answered a need, was an easy means of showing favour to poets, and finally, because it suited the nature of the oral society. The ustad passed on, by word of mouth or by example, the nuances of the art of writing to his shagird. No recourse to the written word was needed, because the ustad's authority subsumed, and perhaps even surpassed the authority of the book. The "new" poetics that developed and flourished in Rekhta/Hindi over the century and a half between 1700 and 1850 remained unrecorded, for the ustad's oral transmission of all subtleties of theory and practice was available when needed. This also suited the genius of the society which was largely oral, and which respected immediate authority and oral instruction as an important part of cultured existence. This is also reflected in the fact that in due course, one's excellence as a poet became partly a function of whose shagird he or his ustad was, and to a certain extent, the ustad's excellence and status too were judged in terms of the number and excellence of his shagirds. Similarly, while the ustad might authorize a shagird to recite his poems in musha'iras without "showing" them first to the ustad, many poets still preferred to

have, if feasible, the ustad look over their poems before they recited them in the musha'ira or put them in their collection. No poet would, unless he was a "rebel", take shagirds of his own unless the ustad permitted him.

All this is reminiscent of the practice in musical *gharanas*, and Sufi houses. The air was entirely secular, and Muslims would cheerfully take a Hindu as ustad. The example of Sarb Sukh Divana (1727/8?-1788/9), among whose shagirds were the redoubtable Ja'far Ali Hasrat, and Haidar Ali Hairan, is perhaps the best known, though not as well known as one would like it to be.

The "new light" of the post-1857 age extinguished the light on many traditions, including the ustad-shagird tradition. One of the many charges brought against it was that the ustad stifled the originality of the shagird. The ustads remained in business even after the new theory of poetry which called for "natural poetry" and "poetry based on true emotions" seemed all set to abolish the old order of excellence in literature. However, the adherents to the old order were unable to answer the charge that that the ustad destroyed the originality of the shagird. The answer wasn't actually far to seek, and the fact that the answer was never made indicates the intellectual disarray and loss of self-confidence which became the lot of our cultural consciousness after the defeat of of the 1857 movement.

I. A. Richards taught in China during 1930-31 and thus had an opportunity to learn at first hand the fundamentals of Chinese literary culture. He was delightfully surprised to find that the western concept of "originality" had no counterpart in China where remaking an old thing in a new way was considered the mark of true originality. Bertrand Russell had made a similar discovery when he went to China a few years earlier. Similarly, "realism" was never an issue with the Chinese. While the Westerners asked about a work of art, "Is it true?", the Chinese simply asked, "Is it human?" Long before Pankofsky, the Chinese had realized that "art" is just a set of rules that tell us how "reality" should be represented. There is no such thing as a reality "out there" which can be captured by

the artist without any frills or strings. In a painting one doesn't represent reality so much as organize pictorial surfaces in given ways.

Those of us who are familiar with the Sanskrit or Arabic literary culture will immediately recognize that in regard to "originality" and "realism" in literature, our own position is very similar to the Chinese. A necessary concomitant to the idea of originality is that of plagiarism. The great Arab literary theorist Al Jurjani (d.1078) practically denied the existence of plagiarism, saying that literary themes are the common property of all. The Sanskrit as well as the Arab literary traditions insisted on "meaning" and not "truth" as the object of art. The Arabs had the same word *ma'ni*, to denote "meaning" and "literary theme".

Of course, poets do influence each other, in big ways or small. But since "originality" was not a value in our literary tradition, it was never at risk at the hands of the ustad when he dealt with his shagird. In fact, sometimes the ustad would write in the manner of the shagird, if he found that the shagird's manner was more in keeping with the demand of the times. The classic case is that of Mushafi (1750-1824) who during the evening of his life readily adopted the manner of his shagird Atash (1777-1847) who was very good at *khiyal bandi*, a mode that had then become fashionable due to Shah Nasir and Nasikh.

The ustads' inability to meet the charges of the modern age diminished the prestige and also the geographical spread of their institution. The ustad-shagird nexus was, however, so strongly suited to the genius of Urdu literary culture that it never ceased to exist. It exists even today, though the excellence of the ustad, as well as the authority that the institution wielded in the culture are things of the past.

Delhi did some bad things too, and some bad things were intepreted as good, and were added to Delhi's crown by later historians. In 1755-6, Shah Hatim wrote a Preface for his *Divan Zada*, a selection of his poetry that he compiled implying that whatever else he wrote in the past should not be regarded as authentic. He strongly advocated the primacy of

the accepted colloquial idiom over the "bookish" idiom. This was quite proper, but in that Preface, he also suggested that he had given up the use of some words, which were not on the tongues of elegant speakers of Delhi. The words that he singled out were mostly of Sanskrit *tatsam* type, but had entered Rekhta/Hindi perhaps through Braj. He also frowned upon what he called "Bhakha". His last suggestion was that poets should use Arabic and Persian words according to their "original" pronunciation.

It is not quite clear what motivated Hatim to say all this. Perhaps he was desirous of distancing himself from Vali whose attitude to language was practical and non-bookish. Be that as it may, in his *Divan Zada* itself, which according to Hatim was the epitome of his work purged of all "objectionable" usages. Hatim used freely and frequently the very words and constructions that he had held blameable in his Preface. Unfortunately, later historians and grammarians of poetry chose to ignore Hatim's emphasis on the superiority of educated, everyday speech over pedantic, overburdened speech. They placed great value on the negative aspects of Hatim's formulations which were hailed as "reformist". Hatim was, on the basis of his negative and restrictive pronouncements, honoured as having made the first attempt at "purifying" the language.

All this was bad history and even worse linguistic theory, but it gained enormous and very quick currency. Other "reformers" of the language duly appeared or were invented, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. This resulted in loss of flexibility in the language and established the false power ratio of the grammarian (*parole)* laying down the law for the poet *(langue)*, though the natural equation works the other way around. The situation became even direr because the ustad-shagird system permitted the poet to assume the grammarian's role as well. For all its brilliant elegance, the language of Urdu poetry in the nineteenth century doesn't always reflect the ground level linguistic reality.

CONVENTIONS OF LOVE, LOVE OF CONVENTIONS: URDU LOVE POETRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Next to our own, the eighteenth century is the most exciting, vibrant, and productive century in more than five hundred years of literary production in Urdu. Perhaps the most remarkable thing that happened in Urdu literature during that time–traditionally represented by British historiography-influenced writers as a period of decay and disintegration–was the consolidation and discovery of a poetics, of a whole new way of charting out a course for literary creativity in a language that, in Delhi at least, was still a little tottery on its legs in the field of literary production. Delhi, even in the middle of the eighteenth century, boasted of Persian as the *zaban-e urdu-e mua'alla-e shahjahanabad* (the language of the exalted city of Shajahanabad). It described Sanskrit as *hindi-e kitabi*[1](learned Hindi=Indian), and the city's common, spoken language, was known as plain *Hindi* or *Hindvi*. Very little literature in *Hindi/Hindvi* was produced in Delhi during the period 1600-1700– and hardly any during the four preceding centuries– and the literary form of *Hindi* in which this literature was produced was called *Rekhta* (mixed, poured, cement-and-mortar, etc). The term *Urdu* as *language name* came into use much later. Rekhta/Hindi remained the universal name for the language until very nearly the end of the eighteenth century.

Rekhta may have begun independently, as a pidgin. It is more likely that it began as a kind of macaronic verse in Hindi, and gradually assumed a life of its own, so much that the pidgin element was eliminated, giving room to a literary Hindi, such as was already being written in the Deccan, particularly Aurangabad, under the name of Dakani and/or Hindi. However, Delhi, with its cosmopolitan cultural environment, long continued to look upon Rekhta with a faint air of disapproval, as something different from, and inferior to Persian. There is a famous verse by Qa'im Chandpuri (1724-94):

Qa'im, it was I who gave
To Rekhta the manner
Of the ghazal. For otherwise
It was just a feeble thing,
In the language of the Deccan.[2]

This tendency for the word *ghazal* to be taken to mean only *Persian ghazal*, continued until quite late in Delhi. Thus we have Ghulam Hamadani Mushafi (1750-1824), writing around 1820:

Mushafi, I compose Rekhta
Better than the ghazal. So why
Should now one be
A devotee
Of Khusrau and Sa'di? [3]

Delhi's Rekhta/Hindi acquired a literary status and a sophistication that was soon to equal, or even surpass, the best achievements of the past three centuries in Gujarat and the Deccan. This happened mainly due to Vali (1665/7-1708), an Aurangabadi or Ahmedabadi by birth who came to Delhi in 1700. At that time, he was a substantial poet in his own right, regarding only the Persian poets–Iranian or Indo-Persian–as worthy of his mettle. There is a story about Vali being advised at that time by Shah Gulshan, a venerated Sufi and Persian poet

in Delhi to appropriate the rich store of themes and images in Persian and thus introduce a new depth and space in his Hindi/Dakani. There are reasons to disbelieve this story[4]. There is however little doubt that Vali's full Divan arrived in Delhi in 1720. According to Mushafi, Shah Hatim (1699-1783), who was an eye witness to this event, told him that Vali's poetry took Delhi by storm, and became instantly popular with young and old, rich and poor[5].

It is this Divan which provided a jumpstart to Rekhta/Hindi poetry in Delhi, not only by providing an active model, but also by introducing new theoretical lines of thinking about the nature of poetry, and about how to make poems. In short, Vali seems to have provided both the model, and the theory that went with it.

There is an interesting shi'rs, again by Mushafi, in his third Divan, compiled about 1794. He says:

Oh Mushafi, I have,
In this urdu of the Rekhta
Introduced a thousand new things
Of my own making.[6]

There is a certain piquancy in the phrase "Urdu of the Rekhta". (What does it mean: Urdu language as derived from the Rekhta? or does "Urdu" here mean "royal court, camp, camp-market"? "Royal court" seems the more likely meaning). Yet what is most notable here is the bold assertion of invention, the poet's confidence and assurance in his own role as a 'maker', and not just 'imitator' of things in poetry. Judging from the fact that this proudly soaring self-belief is of a poet who wasn't even born in Delhi, and was not a witness to the momentous arrival, more than sixty years ago, of a new wave of poetry in Delhi, it is easy to see that Rekhta/Hindi poetry in the North came of age within a very short time, and the tree of invention in Rekhta continued to give off new shoots for a long time to come.

The major discovery in theory–we first hear about it in the Deccan, in *Ali Nama* (1672), a long poem by Nusrati Bijapuri–was in the concept of *ma'ni*. Nusrati speaks of *mazmun*, and *ma'ni*, as two separate entities[7]. Classical Arab-Persian literary theory spoke only of *ma'ni*– a word now universally translated as *meaning*– in the sense of the "content" of a poem, the assumption being that a poem meant what it "contained". Nusrati, however, uses *mazmun* in the sense of theme, content, the thing/object/idea, which the poem is about. The term *ma'ni* he uses to connote "meaning", that is, the inner, deeper, or wider signification of the poem. Vali too uses the two terms in the senses described above[8]. After him, all Rekhta/Hindi poets in Delhi constantly make use of the distinction for making points about the nature of poetry.

Since the "theme/meaning" distinction doesn't occur in Arabic or Persian, it is strongly probable that Nusrati, a man of great learning, picked it up directly from the Sanskrit, or from Telugu and Kannada, languages which he would have known, and whose poetics is almost entirely derived from Sanskrit. Or he may have come across this idea in the Persian poets of the "Indian style", who themselves may have developed it through their direct and indirect contacts with Sanskrit language and literature from mid-sixteenth century on. These contacts, by the way, remained very strong in the eighteenth century all over the sub-continent, and their effects permeated Rekhta/Hindi poetry as well.

Many advantages accrued to Rekhta/Hindi from this discovery about the dual nature of meaning. For our purposes, the most important seems to have been the change in the ontological status of the lover and the beloved. Now, the lover in the poem need not have been the poet himself, nor did the beloved necessarily have to be a "real" or "real-like" person. In the Deccan, Dakani/Hindi poets often spoke in the female voice–poets like Hashimi Bijapuri (1635-1697/8) consistently

adopted the female persona in the ghazal. Others moved freely from one persona to the other.

The recognition of the poem being splittable in "What is it about?" and "What does it mean?" meant that the poet could assume any persona–now it was not, for instance, Vali the person, who was speaking in the poem, but there was *a* voice, and Vali the poet was only the articulator of that voice. Again, if the poem could mean something else, or more, or different, from what it was about, the person or object or thing about whom, or as a result of transactions with whom, the poem came into existence, did not need to be fixed in any particular gender, for then that would tend to limit the "meaning" aspect of the poem.

The great nineteenth century Urdu poet Ghalib (1797-1869) made this point nicely, more than two centuries later. Qadr Bilgrami, a pupil of his, sent him a ghazal for correction. The *matla'* (opening verse) can be translated as follows:

You brought me into the world
And gave me the poison
Of mortality. What a pity!
You cheated, leaving me alone
In this maze.

Ghalib wrote back, " Tell me, who is it you are addressing here? Except for Fate and Destiny, none else, no boy, no woman, can be imagined to be the addressee.... So I changed the person of the verb to plural...now the utterance is directed equally to the worldly beloveds, and Fate and Destiny." [9]

The contribution of Vali in the development of the new ontology is that in his ghazals, the beloved is occasionally female, often it/he is male, and in many cases, indeterminate. The significance of this is that the notion–articulate or inarticulate– of the protagonist or the speaker in the poem assumes a critical importance. The protagonist-lover could now

be just a notion, an ideal lover, whose gender was not so important as the ideas that could be expressed through his medium. Similarly, the beloved became a notion, an ideal, expressed and realised in the poem by whatever metaphorical construct lent itself conveniently at the moment. Just as the woman/man lover was not actually a woman or man, so the woman/man/boy beloved was not actually a woman, man, or boy.

Since the convention of having the "idea" of a lover or beloved instead of an actual lover/beloved freed the poet-protagonist-lover from the demands of "reality", or "realism", love poetry in Urdu from the last quarter of the seventeenth century onwards consists mostly–if not entirely–of "poems about love", and not "love poems" in the Western sense of the term. This is true of almost all of Indian style Persian poetry too–for obvious reasons–and even of a lot of other Persian poetry of earlier times. But the distinction between poet–the person who actually wrote the poem–and protagonist–the person, or the voice, which articulated the poem– was nowhere so seriously adduced and practiced as in the Indian style Persian poetry, and in Urdu love poetry of the eighteenth century.

The ghazal is often described by West-oriented Urdu critics as a "lyric", and the main quality of the ghazal, as "lyricism". Modern Urdu critics invented even a new term *taghazzul* (ghazal-ness) to describe this quality. It comes as a surprise, if not an incredible and unpleasant shock, to modern students to be told that the term *taghazzul* does not occur in any work or document extant to us from before 1857, the time when a great discontinuity began in our literary culture through colonialist interventions.

There are serious flaws in the proposition that a ghazal is a lyric, and that a rose by any other name, etc. While there doesn't exist a single, hegemonic, seamless image of the lyric

in Western poetics, the lyric is generally understood there to be a poem in which the poets expresses "personal" emotions and "experiences", and does not, in the nature of things, assume an external audience for his poem. Both these assumptions are false for the ghazal. We just saw how new developments in Urdu poetics split the poet-poem-as-one notion, in which a main line "lyric" poem would seem to be anchored. As for the audience, since the ghazal was intended to be recited at musha'iras and public gatherings, and was in any case largely disseminated by word of mouth, the whole proposition of the ghazal as a "personal-private-no-audience-assumed" text becomes ridiculous.

The idea that the ghazal is a poem, in which oral performance plays a great part, has other important consequences. One consequence is that a ghazal may perhaps be expressive of "emotions", in the ordinary sense of the terms. But these are not necessarily the poet's "personal" emotions "recollected in tranquillity" (Wordsworth), or "the spontaneous expression of the powerful feelings of the heart" (Wordsworth)[10], or the "lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake" (Byron)[11]. It was the "verbal contraption" in the poem, to use Auden's phrase, which became the chief object of the poetic exercise. Poems needed to make sense of the experience, or the idea, of love, and in terms that made sense to the audience as a whole, and not a specific individual, beloved, or friend.

Byron was nearer the mark when at another place he said that the poet was "the most artificial" of the artists[12]. But the ideas about the nature of poetry–all poetry–that won the day in Urdu through the efforts of the great modernisers of the late nineteenth century were those of the "lava of the imagination" type, and echoed writers like Wordsworth and Hazlitt, who insisted that a certain lack of "art", and an overflow of "passion" were the hall marks of poetry. Hazlitt, one might recall, said that there was a natural and inalienable connection

between passion and music, and music and poetry. Then he went on to say, "Mad people sang"[13]. Small wonder that phrases like *shirin divanagi* (delectable madness) became the stock in trade of our modern critics when they spoke of the kind of ghazal that they admired.

The distinction between *mazmun* (theme, motif), and *ma'ni* led to the recognition of the fact that there was a universe of discourse particular to the ghazal. Certain kinds of *mazmuns* were admissible in this universe of discourse; others were not. Thus while *mazmuns* were infinite in theory, each *mazmun* had to have affinity with other *mazmuns* before it could be considered a proper subject for poetry. Thus one major convention–common, by the way, to Sanskrit, Indian style Persian poetry, and Indian style Turkish poetry– was that *mazmuns*, even words and images, already used, should be reused, though in a new way, or with a new slant. "Personal" or "personalised" narration was by no means barred, but was not to be encouraged, and preferred only when it made sense in more general terms.

One of the recurrent themes in the eighteenth century Urdu ghazal is the poet's self-denigration as a "writer of elegies", and not of poems proper. Here are some examples:

Nothing falls from the lips of Qudrat
But lamentation. He's no poet
But an elegist for his own heart.

(Qudratullah Qudrat, 1713-91)[14]

It's a whole age
Since Mazhar has been pouring
His lamentations into metre,
And yet in the beloved's mind,
He doesn't speak like a poet.

(Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Janan, 1699-1781)[15]

The above verse is in Persian; Mazhar was a major sufi and an important Persian and Urdu poet in Delhi, and is described as having influenced a great many Urdu poets, especially in the fist half of the century.

Don't describe me as a poet, Oh Mir,
I collected numerous griefs and sorrows
And made up a Divan.
(Mir, 1722-1810, in the third Divan, compiled circa 1785[16]).

I just don't know
If my Divan is a book,
Or an elegy, or
Anything at all.
(Mushafi, in Divan I, circa 1785[17]).

I am not really a poet, Oh Mushafi,
I am an elegy-reciter,
I recite the soz, *and make*
The lovers weep.
(Mushafi, Divan III, circa 1794[18]).

In fact, we can see this convention in action even in the nineteenth century. Here is Syed Muhammad Khan Rind (1797-1857):

Those of a loverly temperament
Often weep while reading them;
Indeed, the poems of Rind
Are not poems, but elegies?[19]

Poetry thus was basically a quest for themes, and love was just another theme, not an event in the poet's real life; only that in the ghazal, love was the most important theme. And the core function of love was to soften the heart, to make it receptive to more pain, which ultimately made the human heart a site for the Divine Light to be reflected upon and into it. Pain, and

things that caused pain, had a positive value. The lover's place was to suffer; the beloved's function was to inflict suffering. This was a Sufistic formulation, but was regularly taken by the ghazal poet to be true for the ghazal universe. Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, a leading and extremely influential Indian sufi of early seventeenth century, wrote that the lover should desire that which is desired by the beloved. Since the lover suffered pain and grief, it is obvious that that was what the beloved desired for the lover. To ask for, or long for, comfort was therefore un lover-like[20].

All this was *mazmun* for Urdu love poetry in the eighteenth century. The poet suffered pain also in search of *mazmuns*. Or he wept for a *mazmun* that was lost, or couldn't be realised, or which was experienced for a moment, and then lost. One is reminded here of Shelley's characterising the creative process as being "conscious of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with a place or person, sometimes regarding our mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden…"[21] So the poet toiled to get the lost visitations back, or mourned at their departure. Mir said:

You have neither grief in your soul
For the mazmun,
Nor is your heart soft with pain.
So even if your face was pale like parchment,
What of it?

(Divan IV, circa 1794[22])

The lover-protagonist and the beloved-object both live in a world of extremes: supreme beauty, supreme cruelty, supreme devotion–all things are at their best, or worst, in this world. The beloved-object is not a passive recipient of the lover-protagonist's tribute of love, or a helpless non-entity, unable to alleviate the lover's pain, or ameliorate his condition. The

beloved's "cruelty" may be real, or a metaphor for his/her indifference, or physical distance from the lover. But the indifference of the beloved is an active stance, it makes a point. The lover-protagonist would prefer death at the hands of the beloved to his/her indifference. Or if one does find oneself to be lucky enough to be killed by the beloved, there are degrees of merit and distinction in death, too. The lover-protagonist is the only true lover: all the rest are false, and given to *havas* (lust), rather than *shauq* (desire), or *ishq* (love) There is a famous Arabic saying: *al ishqu narun yuhriqu ma siva al-matlub.* (*Ishq* is a fire that burns down everything but the object of desire). The rival, the Other (*ghair)* doesn't burn with that fire; even if the beloved kills him, he earns no distinction:

There's the difference of earth and sky
Between the death of the ghair
And my giving up the ghost:
Doubtless, she killed us both, but me
She killed with torture.

(Mir, Divan V, circa 1798-1803[23]).

Also, even if there are other true lovers–though not really possible, such a state can at least be imagined– the lover-protagonist of the ghazal deserves special treatment:

She ought to have maintained
My distinction at the moment
Of killing. What a pity, she
Trampled me into dust, roiling me
With others.

(Mir, Divan II, circa 1775-8[24])

She was heard telling someone
The other day: I'll kill someone.
Well, there's no one who so deserves
To die, but me.

(Muhammad Rafi Sauda, 1706? -1781[25])

It should be obvious that in such a scheme of things, "success in love" is not a valid, or powerful, category of thought. No doubt, eighteenth century Urdu ghazal contains some extremely delightful erotic poetry, and these poets are much more conscious of the body, and its pleasures, and the transactions that give rise to, or lead to such pleasures, than their nineteenth century successors. Yet success in terms of this universe is unsuccess–the greatest success is therefore death. This poetry is thus quite naturally more occupied with dying than most love poetry that one is likely to encounter in other cultures. It reverberates throughout with the terror, and the ecstasy, of dying. Death, in spite of all its uncertainty and unfamiliarity, is an achievement, a respite, a transition:

I hacked through life in every way,
Dying, and having to live again
Is doomsday.

(Shah Mubarak Abru, 1683/5-1733[26])

From being to non-being
The road is just a few breaths
It's not much of a journey–
Passing from this world.

(Sauda[27])

It thus follows that so long as Death doesn't come to him, the lover-protagonist seeks, or gets, suffering and ill luck, disapproval of the "worldly", loss of honour and station. Madness and banishment, or imprisonment or general "ill fame" are the functions of true love: the stronger the madness, the farther the wandering, the blacker the ill fame, the truer and deeper the love. All this is often expressed with the subtlest of word plays, in the most vigorously metaphorical language, and occasionally, with extremely vivid but generally non-carnal realisations of the beloved's body. Since the beloved-object is the ideal in physical beauty too, his/her body can be evoked

freely, but because the idea of the beloved is not anchored into any particular person or gender, the narration, though bold, is rarely physical in the modern sense of the word.

Evocation, rather than description is the rule in the ghazal. This is also true of all other characteristics, circumstances, transactions, of the lover and the beloved. The only items somewhat firmly anchored in quotidian, recognizable reality are the "other" "Others"– friends, advisers, preachers, censors, the devout, and the priestly–that is, all those who are in principle not in favour of the lover throwing his life away, or destroying his faith by following the course of love, rather than that of the world, and of God as seen by the worldly and the priestly. The lover rarely listens to them, and generally holds them in contempt, regarding them as benighted, materialistic, and mundane, having no understanding of the inner life. The phrase *ahl-e zahir (*the people of the obvious and apparent) sums it up all. The world of the ghazal is one world where the Outsider is the Hero, where non-conformism is the creed, and where prosperity is poverty.

In spite of its idealistic and unworldly air, the poetry of the ghazal wears an air of delight, of enjoyment, in making up poems through words, in making the language strain at its limits, and yet remain *ravan* (flowing, felicitous, smooth in reading aloud, easy to remember: all these things are denoted by the term *ravani*). All poets, in even conventionally "sad" narration, employ word play to the best of their power. A certain restraint in physicality, and a certain exuberance in execution, mark much of the best Urdu love poetry from the eighteenth century:

In the Time's garden, Oh how well
My fortune sleeps. I am verdant
And prosperous like the green grass;
But it's a sward that's crushed
To sleep by the feet that walk

Upon it.
(Khvaja Mir Dard, 1720-85[28])

The verse turns on a play on *sar sabz (verdant, thriving),* sabza (greenery), and *khufta/khvabida* (sleeping) whose subtlety can't really be conveyed in any translation or *explication.* Most modern Urdu readers, brought up on false notions of "naturalness" of expression, are taught to feel disappointed and let down to see a "serious" poet like Dard indulging in the "frivolity" of word play on such an occasion. Yet the poets knew better. They knew that word play infuses new life into old themes, expands the horizon of meaning, and often makes for an ambiguity of tone which enriches the total feel if the poem. Here is an almost exact contemporary, using the same image, to a different effect:

Like the grass
That grows on the roadside,
I was trampled off
By the multitude
In a single sortie.
(Qa'im Chandpuri, 1724-94[29])

It is a powerful verse, but lacks the additional energy of meaning that Mir gives to the same theme by word play:

I was grass newly sprung on the roadside
I raised my head to be crushed down by feet.
(Divan I, circa 1754[30])

The word play revolves around *nau rusta* (newly liberated, newly sprouted, newly sprung), *sar uthana* (to raise one's head, to rise in rebellion), and *pamal hona* (to be trampled underfoot). It is obvious that Qa'im's verse lacks these dimensions which are afforded to the poem by word play.

As we can see, "sadness" of theme or "authenticity" of emotion is not the point here. The poet and the audience both know that it is in the nature of certain themes to be sad, and they are not interested in how "sad" is "sad". Their primary concern is to renew, and refashion, and thus demonstrate and realize the potential of the language. Intertextuality, imagination, audience expectation, all play their part. Obviously, eighteenth century poets did not have twentieth century Indian readers in mind.

Let's now examine how "erotic" is erotic in this kind of poetry. Word play is important here too. But other devices like all kinds of sensuous imagery, metaphor, and a sense for dialogue and drama also come into play. An epistemological convention almost always respected here more than most is that things are expressible by their essence, or epitome. There is an essential "itself-ness" in each thing, and it is this, rather than specific points, which needs to be indicated by the poet. Ghalib (1797-1869), though not of the period we are discussing, put it best:

The rose, the poppy, the eglantine
Are all of a different colour.
In every style, every colour
One needs to affirm the spring.[31]

Thus the rose is the essence of all roses, and since the beloved is the essence of all beloveds, so *gul* (rose) is often employed to mean "beloved". The central image of the rose generates an almost infinite complexity of metaphors, but the human body beats it all:

How can the rose have the clearness, the finish of your body?
And then, there is the bride-like fragrance of good fortune,
Poured into it to the full.

(Shaikh Jur'at, 1748-1809[32])

This is based on Shah Hatim (1699-1781), and reading Hatim's verse, one can see how great a difference the suggestive imagery has made in the case of Jur'at:

You whose body is like a rose,
How exciting are the waves
Of fragrance from your perspiration,
Roses are now perfumers, and
The breeze is ever so pleased.[33]
(Shah Hatim)

Doubtless, Hatim is more earthy in talking of the perspiration as a heady perfume, and his globalization of the perspiration-as-fragrance is piquant, but the verse feels bookish when put beside that of Jur'at.

Morning, she rolled her sleeves
Up to the elbows–
The nakedness of her body, entire,
Was drawn into the hands.
(Mushafi, Divan III, circa 1794[34]).

How closely it clings
To her gold-like body,
There's someone whose
Sulphur-coloured dress burns
My heart much with envy.
(Mir, Divan VI[35], Circa 1809/10).

Mir and Mushafi both use the image of the clinging dress over and over again, and always to great effect:

If you would always wear
Dresses of this design
I for one would never say,
"Please put off your dress."

(Mushafi, Divan III, circa 1794[36]).

My heart is torn to pieces
Envying her clinging dress
How tightly the dress
Hugs the body

(Mir, Divan VI, circa 1809/10[37]).

Consider the date: Mir was nearly eighty-eight when he put together this last, sixth Divan. Also consider the word play: the heart that tears, and the dress that clings. It should be clear that the verse wouldn't have had much to do with Mir's "real life" at that time. It is the play of imagination on a favourite theme, the life of the mind, and the poet boldly writing and rewriting on the palimpsest that enables such vivid and "naughty" poems to be made.

The question that most bothers western readers (and, unfortunately, now a number of native readers too) is that of the beloved's gender. The fact that in many ghazal shi'rs, the lover and beloved can be construed as male, or the beloved can be construed to be a boy, was seen by the modernizing Urdu critics of the late nineteenth century as an embarrassment, if not an indictment of the whole ghazal culture. It never seems to have bothered anyone else before. Many reasons are offered by the modern critics for this "lapse of taste" committed by the eighteenth century Urdu poets: an almost universal vogue of various kinds of same-sex love–from homoeroticism to open pederasty; segregation of women in the society; influence of Iran; "corrupt" practices prevalent in religious and Sufi institutions; general decline of "moral" values, encouraging every kind of dissolute life; and so on[38].

No one, of course, seems to have asked the "accused" if they had any explanation or defence. All of us were in the greatest hurry to apply the moral standards of Victorian-Colonial India to a culture that was nowhere near being

colonised at that time. In fact, during a great part of the eighteenth century, the boot was on the other leg: it was the English who were trying to adopt what they thought was the Indian life style. Throughout the eighteenth, and through much of the nineteenth century, Indians looked down upon the English as essentially uncivilized. A white complexion was not yet a thing of universal praise and desire.

One who, in preference
To those of a dark-complexion,
Hankers after the white ones–
Connoisseurs of beauty
Regard him as heart-dead.[39]
(Shah Mubarak Abru, 1683/5-1733).

Let me go hunt the Dark-
Coloured Beauty. Why die
At the hands of the light-weight
White ones? [40]
(Muhammad Shakir Naji, 1690? 1744).

The point that I want to make here is that by late nineteenth-century standards, fairness of complexion may have been the greatest of merits in a person, but poets of the eighteenth century should not be blamed for holding a different opinion. Similarly, questions about the beloved's gender didn't bother the poets of that time because they weren't practicing "realism", or writing autobiographical poems. The beloved was, first and foremost, an idea, and that idea could be represented in one of many ways. The beloved's anthropomorphic character was often left vague, especially by poets inclined toward Sufism. The general literary feeling was, anyway, in favour of ambiguity and richness of interpretive potential.

Once the beloved was no longer anchored in any given entity, it became possible to play all kinds of possibilities. Man, woman, boy, God himself, all, or none of them, but a

general sense of "belovedness", became possible. The "you" of the ghazal assumed a life of its own. There is no question but some of the poems are clearly homoerotic or even pederastic. Also, there is no question but in many of such poems it is very hard to determine the tone– ironic, or self-mocking, or just conventional, or maybe all of this rolled into one. Similarly, the shi'rs in which the gender, or the identity of the beloved is so vague as to encompass both "profane" and "sacred" love, would perhaps outnumber all other kinds of shi'rs in the eighteenth century ghazal put together.

What is really important here is not the question of who? Or why? And how bad or how good a light it reflects on the poets. Literature is a system in its own right, it needs to be understood and judged, first and foremost, in its own terms. Is the system coherent? Do all its parts make sense separately, or collectively? These questions are more valuable than those of "moral soundness" or "political correctness" in regard to the literary output of a culture.

The matter of real importance thus is to understand the poetics which enabled poems to be written where the poet could be heterosexual, sufistic, homoerotic, or pederastic at the same time, and where the beloved could have characteristics of both man and woman in the same poem, often in the same shi'rs. This is how this came about.

The liberation of the beloved from the constraints of gender identity enabled the poet to use all possibilities as it suited him. For example, let the beloved be a boy. Now the convention is that the beloved is always assumed to be youthful in age and appearance. Since intensification is a common device in this poetry, the age of the beloved became gradually so reduced that he could be imagined, without any sense of incongruity, as little more than a baby. Little children everywhere love to ride a short staff, or the cane-reed, pretending to be expert

horsemen. In Urdu, the word for such children is *nai savar* (cane-reed rider). Now this is Mir:

Well, love is a terrible thing indeed
Even Mir, much given to lamenting
Ran on and on, like a petty servant
Yesterday, alongside the cane-reed riders [41]
(Divan III circa 1785).

There is a bit of word play here, but it's not a great shi'rs. Still, the great thing about it is that Mir carries off the image of a grown up person running hot like a footman behind a reed-riding child. Even in English translation the poem doesn't sound risible. In Urdu, it sounds entirely appropriate. Here is a shi'rs by Mushafi:

Wearing my heart on my sleeve,
I was always there, around him
Even in the days when he played
Marbles with the urchins of the street. [42]
(Divan I, circa 1785).

The Mushafi shi'rs does not have the *ravani* that Mir's has, but the point, I think, is clearly made by the two examples: the poet-protagonist-lover is not a paedophile. It is the convention– the *ecriture*– to use a fashionable word, that's doing the writing here. And by the same token, if the beloved is assumed to be a grown up man, he is conventionally seen as a boy, or adolescent, on whose face the down has not appeared, or is just appearing. All these are again full of possibilities for *mazmun*-making. It is quite common, for instance, to say that the appearance of the down on the face has made the beloved more beautiful, hence crueler, less truthful, and more prone to break promises. The word most used for "down" in such cases is *khat*, which also means *writing,* and therefore, a *written agreement or letter*. Mir Tahir Vahid, a noted Iranian poet of the Indian style, makes the point beautifully:

How can Vahid claim his heart
Back from you now?
The day he gave it to you,
There was no khat *between us.*[43]

(Mir Tahir Vahid, d. 1708).

In the following verse, Naji (1690?-1744) implies that the bearded face of the beloved is more devastating that that a clean one. Unfortunately, my translation loses the delightful word play. Anyway, here is it, for whatever it is worth:

For how long the practice
Of tyranny, dearest?
Cut your hair short,
Shave off your beard.[44]

Taking advantage of the fact that the beloved's hair is occasionally described as the rays of the sun, and the sun's rays are supposed to kiss the dewdrops on the rose, Naji says:

If you desire union with
The sun, keep your eyes wet
With tears, like the dew.[45]

The two eighteenth century poets who are most given to *mazmuns* of boy love, homosexuality, homoeroticism, so forth, are Shaikh Mubarak Abru (1683/5-1733) and Muhammad Shakir Naji (1690?-1744). It is not clear that their interest in these themes was based on actual propensity, and if so, how far did this propensity enter their real life. Abru never married, and if the following verse of from him is taken as a true statement of personal preference, he looked down upon heterosexuality as improper and unloverly:

One who passes by a boy
And loves women
Is no lover. He is
A man of lust.[46]

We know that there were many women in Mushafi's life, yet he claims–again, if the poem is accepted as true personal evidence–a certain proclivity for bisexuality:

Though the catamite gives pleasure
Of a sort, I didn't find
The true pleasure of love
But in women.

(Divan IV, circa 1796 [47]).

In any case, such verses, whether true testaments or false, would not have shocked their audiences in the eighteenth century. Indian society has never looked upon homosexuality with the horror and anxiety that have characterised western responses to it since the early modern period. K. J. Dover tells us that among the Greeks, homosexual transactions were intercultural, and anal penetration was not permitted, at least in theory. If some of the Indian eighteenth century accounts are to be believed, while there were any number of professional boy beloveds in Delhi at that time, even touching and kissing were considered improper, and were to be discouraged strongly.

The story is told, for instance, of a poet called Aftab Rai Rusva's love for a boy. Rusva came from a well to do family, and was gainfully employed when he fell in love with the boy. He gave up his job, began to wander naked in the streets of Delhi, mad and uncaring. Once he found his beloved holding court, surrounded by friends and admirers. Apparently there had been no physical contact between Rusva and the boy until then. Finding him in open company, Rusva was overwhelmed by passion, and boldly kissed his beloved. This lapse from decorum so enraged the boy that he fatally stabbed Rusva who refused medical aid and all other succour. He recited the following verse (apparently his own) as he died:

Though my master may not
Sew up the wound in my heart,

What of it if I die,
Let my master live.[48]

Abru has left us a long poem in the *masnavi* form, addressed to a young male who wants to set up as a beloved. Detailed instructions about toilette, make up, hairstyle, deportment, and speech, are given. He is also advised to retire as soon as his beauty starts declining, though not immediately after the down appears, or even after the whiskers grow stiff, necessitating their removal: for the down also is "the secret of beauty, and goodness". It is God's "artistry on the face". Coquettish behaviour is okay, but things should never be allowed to become physical:

Be sure that among your lovers
There's none that is vulgar,
Lustful, unchaste, filthy hearted
You already have beauty, now
Look for sophistication,
A bad-living person is
No beloved at all.[49]

Choudhri Muhammad Naim has an excellent analysis of the poem, and the issues involved in it. The interested reader is referred to it.[50] My limited concern here is to show that however much rooted in the social mores of the eighteenth century, boy-love, and man-love, as depicted in this poetry, are, for us, not "social" but literary issues. These themes, and their treatment in the extant form, became possible due to literary reasons. And in any case, since poetry then was not expected to reflect social reality (as if there could be one seamless, omniwhere social reality which poetry could catch hold of), but deal with *mazmuns*, the issues of the beloved's gender, age, profession, social status, never arose, and we would be doing serious injustice to this poetry if we raised such issues now.

Mir described one of the qualities of his poetry of which he was particularly proud as *ada bandi.*[51] This term, vague in

itself, is hard to translate. It means something like "depiction and narration of the beloved's coquetry, dress and manners, speech and body language". Mir, no doubt, excels here, as he does in many things. But he does much more. The depths and intensities of experience, coupled with the fullest possible vocalisation of the mysterious power of love that Mir is able to achieve is not seen elsewhere in this century, or in any century, for that matter. In Mir's poetry, the dimensions of both loss and gain are infinite, and yet the poems are strictly earthy, not abstract or cerebral. A great deal of Urdu love poetry can be interpreted as sufistic, but Mir retains the everyday, human dimension even while suggesting things best seen on a cosmic scale.

The thing that immediately strikes the reader's mind from the eighteenth century–as compared to the nineteenth–is the human relationship aspect, the *ada bandi*, the rare meetings and closenesses, the all too frequent partings and the distressing distances between lover and beloved that the eighteenth century poetry highlights for us. Mir was thus quite correct in giving *ada bandi* such importance in his scheme of things.

It is largely because of *ada bandi* that the beloved in the eighteenth century ghazal is not the passive, hiding-behind-the purdah, slightly tubercular, recoiling from the slightest physical contact, shrinking-violet type of little girl much touted by modern critics as the optimal beloved in the ghazal. This image gained currency through modern "classicist" poets like Hasrat Mohani (1875-1951), and attempts continue to be made to fit all ghazal to this image, but even a brief look at the ghazal of this period will demonstrate the falseness of this image. Here is Hatim:

Our bodies and souls were one
There were no cracks
But both our hearts longed

Just for a word or two.

I still remember that heart enticing
Hint of yours, making up
A little pan *from a filbert*
Leaf, and flinging it toward me.

At that time, right then
My heart was in your firm grasp
When you let your hand
Touch with mine.

(Shah Hatim, composed 1736-37 [52]).

Scooting over a little bit, bit by bit
You came to sit right next to me
What skittishness, effrontery,
Self-assurance!

(Shah Hatim, composed 1743 [53]).

The beloved here is a conscious participant, and since the gender is not specific in any of the four shi'rss I quoted above, the lover-protagonist here need not necessarily be male, just because the poet is male. In fact, even in the general scheme of things, though the lover/beloved became essentially genderless, the lover-protagonist inherited some of the qualities from the original, female protagonist in the ghazal. That is, many qualities which are generally identified in Indian society with women–steadfastness against the (male) beloved's fickleness, being gi ven to copious weeping, growing thin, and wasting away, being patient, and self-surrendering–came more and more to be the mark of the lover-protagonist in the eighteenth century ghazal. I discussed the "female" aspects of the lover-protagonist's personality in a paper.[54] One might recall here that Muhammad Hasan Askari, Urdu's greatest modern critic, identified Mir's greatest strength and poetic quality as his ability to fully and unconditionally surrender his lover's self to the beloved, and even to the world and its people.[55]

We'll now look briefly at one point relating to the epistemology of metaphor, and close this necessarily brief discussion of a wide and difficult subject. Non-native readers, and now most of the native ones even, are shocked and even revolted by the image of the beloved and the lover as presented in the ghazal. The beloved seems mindlessly given to bloodshed, kills countless people at one stroke, lets rivers of blood flow in the streets, cuts the lover up into pieces, is deliberately and sadistically cruel, so forth. The lover is apparently the most wretched of persons, partly or wholly mad, revelling in being denigrated, often grovelling in the dust or mud in the beloved's street, and so on. These things are true, except that they are seen in the ghazal universe as positive, not negative characteristics, and the reason for their being where they are is again literary, not the social or mental backwardness of our poets.

Metaphors are also to be understood in their "literal" sense, before they can start making sense as metaphor. Abdul Qahir Jurjani held that in some cases, rejection or deferment of the literal sense would lead to losing all the sense contained in the metaphor. He quotes the line *Shamsun tuzalliluni minashshamsi* (A sun gives me shade from the sun) and says that although the sun is a metaphor for the beautiful slave who opened an umbrella over the head of his master to protect him from the sun, the line has no meaning unless it is read as if there were no metaphor at all.[56]

Schleirmacher made a similar point about the literality of metaphor eight centuries later when he said, "Words used in the figurative sense retain their proper and specific meaning, and achieve their effect only through an association of ideas on which the writer depends".[57]

One implication of the "literalness" of metaphor was on the epistemological level: metaphors do not represent facts; they are facts. Thus a metaphor could be treated as a fact, and

another metaphor drawn from it. From that metaphor again, another one could be derived, and so on. Shibli No'mani (1857-1914), the great modern Indian-Persian scholar and critic, was the first to point this out.[58] Instead of the frightening "infinite regress" of meaning that one finds in Derrida, here was an exhilaratingly infinite progress of metaphor, and each metaphor was a fact in its own right. Consider the following:

The lover obviously loves the beloved more than he loves his own self. This leads to the metaphor/idiom: *kisi par marna=to die on someone*. Or, there is the metaphor/idiom: *kisi par jan dena=to give up one's life for someone*. This leads to the proposition: The beloved can cause death. This is followed by the proposition: The beloved can kill. This is followed by: The beloved is a killer. Now a new line of metaphorical reasoning takes over: The beloved kills–with a look. Her eyes therefore are daggers, or swords, or a weapon of killing. Now swords etc. need to be sharpened; so the kohl applied to the eyes is a sharpener. But why should only the eye be the sword/dagger, etc.? The beloved's coquetry also can kill. So another set of metaphors comes into existence. Then since the beloved has a number of lovers, and all lovers, by definition, get killed, so the beloved can kill a whole host of people in one glance=blow. Then, killing with a dagger or a similar weapon causes blood to flow. Hence the beloved's street is a place where one smells blood, like Cassandra, anticipatively, or actually. If a number of people get killed at the same time, rivers of blood flow in the city, and the beloved can be seen riding his/her/its charger in triumph.

Then, the beloved doesn't necessarily kill; she may inflict a wound or two, and stop at that. The lover now can react in any number of ways, given the "fact" that the wounds are real wounds. For example: The lover writhes in pain, ecstatically, hoping to "enjoy" the moment for as long as possible; the lover may complain, to the effect that the beloved was casual, and not in earnest; or worse still, she was deliberately casual and

intentionally delivered only a glancing blow, so as to deprive (because she is perverse by definition) the lover of the pleasure and honour of dying. The lover may plead for the killing blow, or feel angry and disappointed at being reprieved.

A casual blow, or refusal on the beloved's part to kill the lover, may also involve a value-judgement: the lover is poor material, not fit to kill. This may again be due to one of many reasons: the lover is qualitatively inferior; he is not a good enough lover, or distinguished enough as a person, to deserve killing at the hands of the beloved. Or, it may be that the lover has grown "pale, and spectre thin", has wasted away, and is therefore not worth the trouble of killing. Or maybe the beloved, or her sword–yes, even the sword, because the shine and sharpness of a sword is described as its *ab*=*water*–may perspire, out of shame at having to kill such a wretch who is more than half-dead himself.

And if there are wounds, then there are doctors, surgeons, expert or inexpert sewers up of the open wound. The lover should, by definition, refuse any kind of aid, medical or spiritual. This gives rise to another set of metaphors. Or the lover's wound may have been sutured, but the sly lover knows his job. He has fingernails to pick at the stitches, or reopen the wound.

The wounds may be self-inflicted, in a fit of frenzy, for instance, but not with a view to suicide. Or the wounds may have been inflicted by the street arabs, who harass and torture the mad lover and pelt him with stones. The lover actually desires this, because loss of dignity, honour, and station, being insulted by the meanest, and treated with contumely even by street urchins, ensures the death, or least the suppression, of his own Self, and thus makes himself more suitable for "dying" in the beloved. Negating his own being, he affirms the being of the beloved, who alone is sufficient as life, and as life-taker-giver. So the lover actually desires and welcomes the rocks

thrown at him by naughty children. In a shi'rs of Mir's, the protagonist-lover heaps rocks and stones in his street so as to make it easy for the street arabs to throw them at him. A seventeenth century Persian poet of the Indian style put it most piquantly, summing up a whole culture of love, and madness, and self-effacement, in these two lines:

The madman goes his way,
And the children go theirs;
Say, friends, does this city of yours
Have no rocks or stones? [59]

(Syed Husain Khalis, d. 1710).

All this, and much more, could become possible for the simple reason that in the poetics of Indian style Persian poetry, and all classical Urdu poetry, the *metaphor* of dying is treated as a *fact* from which another metaphor can be generated, and the resultant metaphor, in turn, treated as *fact*, generates other metaphors. What sounds bizarre, or distasteful, to minds untrained in this poetics, falls quite naturally into place as proper and desirable–in fact unique in all poetry since early modern times–once it is seen as a rhetorical system which permits metaphors to be made bóth paradigmatically and syntagmatically.

Western poetics has generally treated metaphor as a paradigmatic device, which is true as far as it goes. But the picture changes drastically once metaphor and fact are treated as interchangeable, as in the Urdu and Indian-Persian poetics. Now metaphors can be generated syntagmatically as well. Thus: if *p* is the same as *q*, then the characteristics of *q* also apply to *p*. The lover is a *captive* (of the beloved, or of love). Birds also are made captive, so the lover is a bird. A captive bird is kept in a cage, so the lover is in a cage. In order to be made captive, the bird has to be captured; the person who captures a bird is a hunter=*saiyad*. So the protagonist-lover-bird was made captive by a *hunter*. But the bird-protagonist is the lover too. And the

person who captured the lover is the beloved, who thus equals *saiyad*, and so on.

Syntagmatic thinking makes for an infinity of metaphors, because the metaphors generated by it do not depend on similitude between two apparently dissimilar objects (which, Aristotle said, was the soul of metaphor), but on association. Western philosophers have long held that there are no rules for metaphor making. This is quite true, so long as metaphors are seen as hinging upon similitude. Once that barrier is broken, a simple rule emerges: metaphors can be made by the power of association, *so long as each metaphor is taken as the fact itself, and not the substitute for that fact.* A delightful example of this procedure is that the eyes of the beloved are often described in this poetry as *bimar=ailing, indisposed.* Apparently there could be nothing more dissimilar to the beloved's eyes than ailment, or indisposition. Syntagmatism makes this possible, thus: *ankh uthna/uthana* is *for the eyes to be raised.* Those who are ailing cannot rise. The beloved keeps his/her eyes lowered, out of modesty. So the eyes cannot rise, so they are indisposed. Thus, the more indisposed or ailing the beloved's eye, the better it is, for it affirms both her status, and chastity, as beloved.

Going back to the status of the beloved as the rightful taker of lives, it is natural that there are no suicides in the eighteenth century ghazal, or any classical ghazal, for that matter. There are countless deaths and woundings, burials and half burials, but no one ever kills himself. For that would deprive the lover of the merit of being killed by the beloved, and worse still, by killing himself, the lover would presume to occupy the space that can be occupied only by the beloved. There is scarcely any talk of suicide in this world, and Mir, who has a few delightful verses on this theme, makes it do more work than its nature, and the nature of the ghazal universe, would seem to imply: The following is from Divan II, put together around 1775-78:

Don't leave sword or axe
Anywhere near Mir,
Lest he waste himself. [60]

The idea here is not so much to emphasise the act of Mir's killing himself, as his character: Mir is no wilting lily, or an adolescent in the throes of calf love. The other point is that by killing himself, he would be wasting himself; he is too valuable to be wasted. The ambiguity of the verb used to indicate the act of suicide permits two meanings. The other shi'rs:

I said to her: I am
Out of my patience, entirely;
What should I do,
Kill myself? She said,
"Oh yes, man, must
Do something." [61]

(Shikar Nama II, circa 1790).

The ironical dimensions of this verse can only find a match in the miraculous economy of the diction. The two-line shi'rs in the original though in a metre of normal length, that is, a metre that requires four feet to a line and not three, contains eighteen words, of which fully eight have only one syllable. Of the rest, nine are disyllabic; there is only one trisyllabic word. Those who read Urdu would know that Urdu favours disyllabic and trisyllabic words. Words of four syllables too are quite common. A verse having a heavy preponderance of unisyllabic and disyllabic words, and packing so much meaning in it, is a rarity, even in Mir.

The final impression that a major eighteenth century poet's ghazal leaves on us is not that its protagonist (and some of us erroneously tend to identify protagonist with poet) is a person much given to wine and love, but who is essentially a helpless slave to social power or sexual desire, battered and defeated. Instead, we are left with the feeling that we have been in close touch with a vigorous, complex intellect, a mind capable of

self-mockery and introspection, a body and spirit that have suffered and enjoyed, and are still prepared to suffer and enjoy, a soul that is no stranger to the mystic dimensions of existence, an outsider and nonconformist who cannot be patronised. An invitation to pity is nowhere to be found in his vocabulary.

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[47] Mushafi, *Kulliyat,* Vol. IV, Ed., Nurul Hasan Naqvi, Lahore, Majlis Taraqqi-e Adab, 1974, p. 56.
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after being so bathed. A very similar incident of the lover's killing, by the boy-beloved of a disciple of Baba Shah Musafir, the well known Aurangabadi sufi of the eighteenth century, is narrated in an account of the Shaikh, translated by Simon Digby. See Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Aurangzeb's Deccan*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 80-81..

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[55] Muhammad Hasan Askari, "Mir ji" in *Waqt ki Ragini*, Lahore, Maktaba-e Mehrab, 1979, pp. 206-209, and "Ghalib ki Infiradiyat" in *Takhliqi Amal aur Uslub*, Karachi, Nafis Academy, 1989, pp. 128-130.

[56] Abdul Qahir Jurjani, *Asrarul Balaghat*, Ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul, at the Government Press, 1954, p. 21. Also see Kamal Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjani's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1979, pp. 77-80.

[57]Quoted in Zvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, Trs. Catherine Porter, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 161-162. Many modern philosophers of language too hold similar views about the "literality" of metaphors. Paul Ricoeur develops Schleirmacher's ideas in the direction of psychology. See "What Metaphors Mean" by Donald Davidson, and "The Metaphorical Process" by Paul Ricoeur in Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor*, University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 29-45 and pp 141-157. It must be noted that Jurjani's position is more firmly grounded in semantics and is demonstrated easier than the positions taken by the western philosophers cited above.

[58] Shibli No'mani, *She'r ul Ajam*, Vol. V, Azamgarh, Matba'-e Ma'arif, 1957, p. 76. [1918].

[59] Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Janan, *Kharita-e Javahir, Anthology of Persian Verse*, Kanpur, Matba'-e Mutafa'i , 1855, p. 105. [Circa 1740]

[60] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Vol. I, Ed., Zill-e Abbas Abbasi, Delhi, Ilmi Majlis, 1968, p. 434.

[61] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Lucknow, Naval Kishor Press, 1868, p. 1031.

THE POET IN THE POEM OR, VEILING THE UTTERANCE

Choudhri Muhammad Naim spent very nearly two decades perfecting his translation of *Zikr-e Mir*, Mir's autobiography. Written in difficult, somewhat idiosyncratic, and occasionally quite obscure Persian, it has fascinated scholars and students of Mir ever since it was discovered in the late 1920 and printed in 1928.[1] Yet, apart from the fact that its author is perhaps the greatest Urdu poet ever, it signally fails to do what autobiographies are supposed to do: it tells us practically nothing about Mir as a person, or even as a poet. What Mir claimed to have done in *Zikr-e Mir* is as follows (in Naim's excellent translation):[2]

> Now says this humble man, whose *takhallus* is Mir, that being unemployed these days and confined to my solitary corner, I wrote down my story [*ahval-i khud*], containing the events of my life [*halat*], the incidents of my times[*savanih-i rozgar*] and some [other related] anecdotes [*hikayat*] and tales[*naqlha*].

Naim tells us in his Introduction that in *Zikr-i Mir*:[3]

> The account of Mir's own life is scattered and quite summary in nature. He does not give us the kind of personal details we expect in an autobiography. He does not tell us what year he was born in, or got married in, or how many children he had and when; he is silent about his peers and his interaction with them in literary gatherings; he doesn't even mention any of his writings.

So what was the purpose of the exercise, or experiment in autobiography that Mir undertook apparently in all seriousness? Judging from what little we know of Mir, the

autobiography seems to present a picture– if at all it can be called a picture– of Mir which is not on all fours with his real personality. To quote Naim once again:

Contrary to the image created by Muhammad Husain Azad in *Ab-e Hayat*, the most influential of all histories of Urdu poetry,[4] and his own frequent remarks in *Zikr-i Mir*, Mir was not always a dour recluse. In fact, on the evidence of many of his topical poems, he could be said to have been a man of appetites. He could feel strongly for his friends and lovers and openly find pleasure in their company, just as he could launch scurrilous attacks against those who would enrage him for any reason. The poems he wrote about his patron Asafuddaulah's hunting expeditions– they are thematically unique in Urdu poetry– display a keen appreciation of natural beauty. He also appears to have been quite fond of animals– at various times, he kept cats, dogs, and goats as pets, and wrote delightful poems about them.[5]

Thus *Zikr-i Mir* seems to conceal much more than it reveals, and what it does reveal about its author is either inconsequential or not quite in conformity with the image of Mir that has reached us through sources other than this so called autobiography. One might almost say that Mir composed *Zikr-i Mir* to dissemble, rather than reveal. It is true that no auto biographer reveals everything, but one can expect a responsible auto biographer to reveal something, and to ensure that whatever he does reveal is not false. A good example is the autobiography of Bertrand Russell. It merely hints at or suppresses almost all the unsavoury aspects of the author's life and character; it edits the truth to present the author in the best possible light.[6] Yet what it does present is substantial and true information about its author.

Mir's autobiography reads in part like a hagiography of his father and grandfather's spiritual merits, and in part like notes of contemporary events hurriedly jotted down in a private

journal. A lot of the material has no date, and a good bit of it doesn't observe any chronological sequence. Small wonder, then, that while Urdu critics have assiduously mined Mir's poetry to glean details about his life and circumstances, they have rarely alluded to, or made use of Zikr-*i Mir* to support their assertions about Mir's personality and what they regard as the "true details" of his life. And even in poetry, only that much has been used which supports the critic's pet notions. Whatever doesn't make it to the horizon of the critic's attention. For instance, the popular myth is that Mir was an intensely unhappy person, especially in love. So, a successful love affair of mature years as described in the apparently autobiographical *Mu'amilat-e Ishq* (Episodes of Love) has been passed over in silence, and the unhappy love story, Khvab *o Khiyal-e Mir* (Mir's Dreams and Imaginings), also apparently autobiographical, has been savoured by our critics "as much as their lips and teeth could permit" (in Ghalib's phrase, though in another context). Russell and Islam cheerfully satisfy the demands of inclusiveness by flying in the face of the poem's evidence and asserting that the "woman in the case" in both *Mu'amilat-e Ishq* and *Khvab o Khiyal-e Mir is* the same, and that the *Khvab o Khiyal* is actually a sequel to the *Mu'amilat.*[7]

Much of our Mir criticism shows a somewhat amusing, somewhat annoying conjuncture of two myths. The first myth is that poetry, especially ghazal, is necessarily the expression of the poet's personal feelings and the events and circumstances narrated in it are, in not entirely factual, based certainly on facts. Myth number two is that since Mir's poetry reveals him to be a sad, embittered man so his life and personality also were sad and embittered. Another way of stating this myth is to say that since Mir's life was all sad and embittered, so his poetry is full of sadness and bitterness. Let me elaborate this a little.

Poetry is the expression of personality: versions of this view have been held sacred in our criticism ever since we realized

that there is a business of criticism and some people are specially equipped to transact it. The late Professor Nurul Hasan Hashmi, a respected teacher of C. M. Naim's, used to observe quite casually and frequently that "poetry was a *dakhili* thing", *dakhili* here being taken to mean anything from "heartfelt", "authentic in some autobiographical sense", to "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", this last, of course, being a statement made by Wordsworth,[8] and made popular among us by undergraduate-school teachers of literature.

One inevitable, and perhaps initially unanticipated result, of this stress on the *dakhili* nature of poetry was that much of the Masnavi, almost all Qasida, and all Ghazal that wasn't based on Sufistic themes or "sacred love" was considered to be out of the pale of *sachchi sha'iri* (true poetry). The term "true poetry" could be interpreted as (1) texts that truly deserved to be called "poetry", and (2) texts that stated "true" things. When influential literary personages like Rashid Ahmad Siddiqi declared that the Ghazal was the *abru* (honour and good name) of Urdu poetry, they clearly intended this to apply to the "authentic", "undefiled" Ghazal, the Ghazal that expressed the poet's "true and natural feelings" and was based on "reality").

The principle that poetry is, or should be, the expression of the poet's "personality" was a natural derivative of the assumption that poetry expressed the poet's "true feelings". This principle was also stated in the following form: Poetry is, or should be, based on "reality", or "truth", or "true facts". It was again only a small percentage of extant Urdu Ghazal that could make the grade according to this formulation. The main demand was that in the ghazal one should narrate or depict only those events and states that one had experienced in person. Thus the Ghazal was seen as something like autobiography.

Andalib Shadani, in a series of famous and very influential articles published from October, 1937 to November, 1940, declared that all good Ghazal was based on the poet's real life experience. Judging from this standpoint, he found the productions of all contemporary ghazal writers to be "false", or poetry of "inferior grade". Their ghazals were not based, according to Shadani, on what he believed should be the true events of love, events that had occurred in the poets' real life, and in fact many of the events described in modern ghazals, like the "death" of the "poet", couldn't have happened at all, because the poet obviously had to be alive to compose the poem.[9] According to Shadani, the essential requirement for the Ghazal was "intensity of feeling and true emotions". He declared further:[10]

> Only those should be considered truly qualified to compose ghazals or narrate the story of love who, in addition to being possessed of poetic powers, give word to their own emotions, write about has really transpired in their life, and write only what they have personally felt.

Shadani held the curious theory that while the "artificial" themes and tropes that abound in Urdu ghazal were purely imitative of Persian and therefore "unnatural", it was quite all right for the Persian Ghazal to have them, because "in the early times, such ideas and themes came into Persian poetry because of the poets' circumstances, and their environment."[11] For example, the Iranians were excessively given to drinking, so it's all right for Persian poetry to be full of images and themes related to wine and song. But in Urdu, the addiction to drink has been a rare occurrence among our poets from the earliest to the modern times. It is therefore impermissible for Urdu poets to wax eloquent on themes of drinking and inebriation.[12]

Firaq Gorakhpuri had urged that modern Urdu ghazal should not be blamed for being full of themes of sadness and pain, for the air of sadness, lament, and anguish of the heart that one encountered in English poems like *The Shropshire*

Lad, The Waste Land, and Hardy's *Wessex Poems*, was much more intense than anything found in Urdu. Shadani took the trouble to translate some passages from these works (he chooses "Death by Water" from *The Waste Land*) to "prove" that:

> Whatever has been said in these poems is entirely *natural* [English word used in the original]. Some of this poetry is a dirge on love's martyrs, some of it a lament on the untimely death of friends, some of it is an involuntary sigh on the death by drowning of someone whose heart's desire remained unfulfilled...[13]

In any other literary environment such statements would arouse derisive laughter, but in Urdu they became the guiding light for later critics like Nurul Hasan Hashmi and Abul Lais Siddiqi who found the poetry of the so-called "Lucknow School" wanting in *dakhiliyat*, devoid of the narration of real circumstances, much given to *kharijiyat* (that is, depiction of external things like the beloved's dress, her toilette, her speech and mode of conduct in a somewhat explicit, faintly erotic manner), and therefore inferior. This also established the principle that poetry that concerns itself with the beloved's physical attributes, even if only in a mildly erotic way, and perhaps based on the poet's own experience and observation, is inauthentic, "effeminate" and not of the first order.[14]

By the time our understanding of "good" and "bad" poetry (or at least ghazal poetry) became firmly established within the discourse of "truth" and "personality", we discovered yet another nugget of "truth" about the nature of poetry. Critics who were led to believe that "individuality" of voice and therefore "originality" of style was a positive value, found Buffon's maxim "*Le style c'est l'homme meme*" much congenial to the theory that poetry was the expression of the poet's personality. The English translation of this dictum, "Style is the man", was understood to mean that personality

colours, or even creates a writer's style. This was conveniently added on to pseudo psychological critical speculations like: Byron would not have been Byron but for his game leg. John Middleton Murry's nebulous semi-metaphysical notions about style also came in handy and his name was often invoked in discussions of this subject. Though his observation that style was "organic—not the clothes a man wears, but the flesh and bone of his body"15 was not actually quoted very often, it informed our critics' assumptions about how the writer's personality revealed itself through his style.

Given the paucity of facts or even clues about the manner of life and feeling of early Urdu poets, there was no better way to determine the contours of a poet's personality than extrapolating inferential facts from his poems, or from whatever "sources" presented themselves. The conclusions were then patched on to poet's status as a literary person. For example, it could be argued that if Mir was seen in *Zikr-i Mir* as telling a lot of lies, we could infer that such a person could not be a good poet, for he would have lied about his affairs of the heart as well, and since poetry, in order to be good, must be based on truth, Mir's love poetry cannot be regarded as good poetry. While we didn't go quite that far in regard to Mir, Ghalib's detractors often found in the "questionable" aspects of his character a suitable stick to beat him with: a person given to drinking, gambling, sycophancy, jealousy, etc., could not be a good poet.

The Urdu Modernists avoided the pitfalls of "personality", but insisted that poetry was *izhar-e zat* (expression of the inner being). This formulation was used as a counterpoint to what was later described as "committed" literature, but was actually the literature of the Party-line. The Modernists said that the poet should write whatever he really feels or thinks. He should not be fettered by outside pressures or persuasions. A true poet describes the truth as he sees it. He narrates truths, conveys to his reader his personal vision; he deals in truths that he

discovers for himself. In other words, the poet does not purvey communal or communitarian truths; he gives to the world only what his inner being says is the truth.

There is no doubt that this principle works very well for the "new" poetry, that is, the poetry written and promoted by the Modernists and their immediate inspirations: Miraji, Rashed, Akhtarul Iman. And it continues to work for the Urdu poetry being written even today. But as a tool for understanding the "classical" or pre-modern Urdu poetry, it is useless. It must go to the great credit of the Urdu Modernists that they didn't try to read and judge classical Urdu poetry in terms of the "expression of the poet's inner being". They however did say that there was no unbridgeable difference between the old poetry and the new, for both were, after all, true poetry. Thus they paved the way for the notion that poetry in not necessarily, and not always, the expression of the "inner being".

The principle that remains on the whole even now dominant in our main line criticism is that poetry, and especially ghazal poetry, in some way mirrors the poet's life and personality. This implies two things: (1) We can derive some truths about a poet's life from his poems, and (2) We can legitimately derive some conclusions about a his poetry from the facts of a poet's life and personality.

Different Urdu critics used these principles within limits set apparently unconsciously by themselves. Also, if some critics stressed the personality of a poet as a foundation on which to erect opinions about his poetry, others used the poetry in order to make generalizations about his personality. For instance, Muhammad Husain Azad depicted Nasikh as a somewhat aristocratic and arrogant person of good culinary appetites who was also fond of "worldly" or "unpoetic" pastimes like physical exercise and wrestling. Against this portrait of Nasikh, Azad posited, perhaps unconsciously, the figure of Atash as a

person of no desires, unworldly to the point of being naïve, self-respecting though not self-regarding, devoid of hypocrisy, and austere like a Sufi. Our critics were not slow in concluding that given these personal traits, Nasikh produced a poetry that was the epitome of Lucknow-ness: a poetry replete with *kharijiyat* and empty of *dakhiliyat*, while Atash's poetry was something else–steeped in the "Delhi" style, a model of *dakhiliyat*, and devoid of the preoccupation with the beloved's body and raiment, so characteristic of Lucknow-ness.[16] That both were actually poets of the same type, and in fact sometimes the poetry of one is practically indistinguishable from the other's, was a fact that doesn't seem to have occurred to any of our critics.

The contradictions and errors bred by the approach: poetry reflects biography, or biography is mirrored in the poetry, can further be seen in our treatment of Nazir Akbarabadi and Amir Mina'i. Seeing in Nazir's poetry an apparent abundance of religious and social multi valence, a proclivity for free, or at least liberal thought, and a lack of stress on religious ritualism, we made no delay in concluding that Nazir displayed these properties of character in his everyday, "non-poetic" life too. Basing ourselves on the poems, we declared Nazir to be an *avami sha'ir* (poet of the people). We ignored Nazir's ghazals because the ghazals could support no such conclusion. As for Nazir's putative liberal and multivalent religiosity, no one seems to have noticed that Nazir, who lavishly praises Hindu and Sikh religious figures, doesn't have a word for the *shaykhain* (the first two Caliphs of Islam).

The exemplary personal piety of Amir Mina'i rubs uncomfortable shoulders with his numerous erotic shi'rs, some of which he liked so much that he put them in a selection of his poetry which he himself compiled.[17] If poetry is expression of personality, should it not be inferred that Amir Mina'i was a man of worldly delights, and a free-living lover of erotic pleasures? Major details of the life of Amir Mina'i are well

known, and speculation of the kind that was freely yielded to in Nazir's case wasn't possible here. So our critics maintained a discreet silence. With all the self-assurance of one who needn't see very far, Rashid Ahmad Siddiqi pronounced it impossible for a "bad" person to be a "good" poet.

For obvious reasons, Mir has had more than his share of theory-flaunting, poetry-twisting critics. For example, Andalib Shadani was quite persuaded that since Mir has a number of shi'rs with homoerotic, or homosexual, or plain boy-love themes, he was an *amrad parast*, a term that means all the above modes of homosexual eroticism.[18] Contrariwise, some of Mir's famous shi'rs which sounded conventionally "sad", or had themes of unsuccessful or unrequited love led the critic to decide that Mir did nothing in his life but weep and utter sad sighs. His clearly humorous or light-hearted shi'rs were dismissed as "lowly", or "vulgar", or somehow darkened by the murk and gloom of personal loss and tragedy. In the Preface to his extremely popular *Intikhab-e Kalam-e Mir, Ma' Muqaddama, jis men Mir ke Halat aur Kalam ki Khususiyat par Bahs ki ga'i Hai* (Mir's Selected Poetry, with a Preface, which Discusses Mir's Circumstances and the Characteristics of his Poetry), Maulvi Abdul Haq had this to say about Mir and his humorous shi'rs:

Light-heartedness and gaiety were not allotted in Mir Sahib's portion; he was the very embodiment of despair and [emotional] deprivation. This is the state of his poetry too. Or rather, his poetry is a true image of his disposition and life-story, and probably this is the reason why it is not devoid of genuineness and reality….

Man's temperament has two aspects: pleasure and delight, or then affliction and grief. Mir Sahib's shi'rs, whether based on love or on wisdom, all reflect grief and affliction, failure and despair. This was the cast of his temperament. He might have been in any circumstance, may have been overpowered by

any state, whenever he uttered something from the heart, it would be saturated in despair and failure. The taste of jesting, or fun, is just not there in his poetry.... His Works do have some humorous shi'rs, but they are either of such vulgarity that they smack of bad taste, or then they have that very unfulfilled longing and despair which stuck with him through his living days.[19]

Majnun Gorakhpuri detected some sort of "revolutionary", or at least a moral and didactic agenda in Mir's poetry, but still he designated Mir "the poet of sorrow", and said something curious to support his contention:

Mir is the poet of sorrow. Mir's age was the age of sorrow. And Mir, had he not been the poet of sorrow, would have committed treason against his age, and would not have been such a great poet for us either. Posterity has regarded only those poets as great who were the true children of their age, and fully representative of it.[20]

All this would be risible, if the matter was not deadly serious, for criticism such as this has governed our appreciation of Mir for the last seventy or seventy-five years. Going back to Maulvi Abdul Haq's judgement on Mir's humour, let me recall here that Maulvi Abdul Haq has quoted just one shi'r of Mir's[21] to "prove" that even the comic verses of Mir are charged with sorrow and despair:

Mir too was mad, but while passing by,
In a jesting way
He would rattle the chains
Of us, the shackled ones.[22]

So what does Majnun Gorakhpuri do to account for Mir's humorous shi'rs? He says:

Let it be remembered that Mir's humour was not of the shallow and cheap kind. His humour had very deep layers of gravity and meaningfulness.

This remark is intended by Majnun Gorakhpuri as a comment on the very shi'r about the "jesting Mir" that Maulvi Abdul Haq quoted to "prove" that Mir's humour was overlaid with tones of sorrow and despair.

It is interesting and symptomatic that these two senior critics who are often praised for establishing the place of Mir in the modern canon, are entirely unable to come to grips with Mir's humour and his pleasantries. Both quote the same shi'r to prove two different points. According to Abdul Haq, Mir's lighter verses are both vulgar and plebeian, or are actually darkened by the shadow of his sorrows and frustrations. Majnun Gorakhpuri, on the contrary, judges Mir's humour as having "serious" purposes underneath.

It must be concluded, however reluctantly, that neither of these critics seems actually to have read Mir carefully. Then they have deliberately distorted the personal and literary picture of Mir to suit their own favourite theories. Both are quite convinced that Mir is a poet of sorrow and pain. Majnun Gorakhpuri attributes this to Mir's age. For it was his age, and his personal circumstances, which had turned Mir's life, and therefore his poetry, into a "perpetual hanging on the gallows". His poetry, especially his ghazals prove that "Mir's voice expresses the whole pain and anguish of his times in an extremely sophisticated and dignified manner."[23] Against this is Maulvi Abdul Haq's formulation to the effect that Mir's temperament itself was extremely susceptible to the experience of pain. According to Majnun Gorakhpuri, Mir's poetry reflects his life; according to Abdul Haq Mir's life reflects his poetry. That is, Abdul Haq diagnoses Mir's temperament to have made his life unhappy, and since his life was unhappy, his poetry was unhappy too. Majnun Gorakhpuri goes the other way round: Mir's age was an age of sorrow, so Mir's life was sorrowful, hence his poetry was sorrowful too. Thus according to Abdul Haq, Mir was essentially an uncouth type who lapsed into indecorous drollery the moment he slipped out of his tenebrous

moods. According to Majnun Gorakhpuri, Mir's was a life of unrelieved gloom and even his humour veiled serious meanings and grave purposes.

The poetry of humor or banter doesn't translate well, if at all. Yet it seems worth while here to invoke Mir's own evidence and present some of his light hearted shi'rs to show what actually he was doing when he wrote in that mode:

I now depart the idol-house, oh Mir,
We'll meet here again, God willing.
Friendship with the boys now darkens my destiny;
My father used to warn me
Often, against this very day.

If I was so minded
I'd fill my arms with you
and lift you up in a trice:
Weighty you may be, but you are
just a flower before me.

Pious Sheikh, your asinine nature
Is known the world over;
You do your hops and skips everywhere,
in refined assemblies, or arid places.

I visited Mecca, Medina, Karbala,
I sauntered around and came back
Just the way I was.

On the Day Of Judgement
By way of punishment for having written poems,
They flung against my head
My own book of poems.[24]

It should be obvious even from these random selections that in range, mood, and verbal subtlety, these shi 'rs present a degree of variety and sophistication which the reductionist mindset of our critics was unequipped to handle. The three

senior critics whose work I have briefly discussed above, I hope without oversimplifying their positions, considered their assumptions about Mir's poetry more reliable than the poetry itself. The assumption that they shared was that poetry is the expression of personality. The only difference was that for Shadani and Abdul Haq, personality meant disposition and temperament, and for Majnun Gorakhpuri it was the sum total of the poet's personal history and the social and political circumstances prevalent in his time.

I need not emphasize here that questions like "personal expression", or "poetry as self-revelation" never arose in classical Urdu poetics, or in Sanskrit poetics, nor yet in the Persio-Arab poetics. Nor were issues like "authenticity", "true expression of real emotions" ever raised in any of the literary traditions that Urdu is heir to. None of the contemporary or near contemporary accounts of Mir, for instance, say a word about his so-called hardships, disappointments and sorrows, or that his poetry is an expression of his bitter personality and the sadness of his life trickles through everywhere in his poetry. The censures of critics like Shadani and the extenuations offered by critics like Firaq Gorakhpuri were both conceived in terms of what they thought was the literary idiom of the western world.

The important thing from the point of view of the sociology and politics of Urdu literary criticism is not the truth or validity of the literary theory offered by Shadani and others. The important thing is that in its essentials, the theory was believed by our critics to be Western in origin, and also (or perhaps therefore) universally true. The fact of the matter, as every student of Western literary thought knows, is that poetry as expression of personality is not a universally recognized notion in the West. On the contrary, up until the advent of Romanticism in England, it had long been recognized in the West that literary texts, especially poems breed other literary texts, and that no literary artefact can be understood outside the

rules and conventions of the genre in which it was written. When a new genre came into existence, every effort was made to present it as not essentially different from the pre-existing literary artefacts of a similar nature.

A good example of this can be seen in the romances (we would now call them "novels") of Madeleine de Scudery, and the prefaces that her brother Georges wrote for them as their putative author. In the Preface to *Ibrahim* (1641) Georges wrote:[25]

> The works of the spirit are too significant to be left to chance; and I would be rather accused of having failed consciously, than of having succeeded without knowing what I was about....Every art has certain rules which by infallible means lead to the ends proposed;...I have concluded that in drawing up a plan for this work I must consult the Greeks..., and to try by imitating them to arrive at the same end....It would be as stupid as arrogant not to wish to imitate them.

This was not just a casual appeal to the Ancients to justify what would have been at that time a novelty. We see Fielding adopting the same strategy in his Preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742). He wishes his text to be read as a "comic romance", and finds justification for it in the practice of the Ancients. Having declared that "poetry may be tragic or comic", and that it "may be likewise either in verse or prose", he designates his "comic romance" as a "comic epic poem in prose":

> Now, a comic romance is a comic epic poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a great variety of characters.[26]

Similarly, in regard to making extensive and even blatant use of the texts of one's literary forebears, it is interesting to see Fielding say in *Tom Jones* (1749):[27]

The ancients may be considered as a rich common, where every poor person who hath the smallest tenement in Parnassus hath a free right to fatten his muse. Or, to place it in clearer light, we moderns are to the ancients what the poor are to the rich....

In like manner are the ancients, such as Homer, Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and the rest, to be esteemed among us writers as so many wealthy squires, from whom we, the poor of Parnassus, claim an immemorial custom of taking whatever we can come at.

Fielding's tone is facetious, but in essence his point is well supported by past theory and practice. I cite Madelaine de Scudery and Fielding to illustrate the point that in the literature of pre-industrial Europe, even new genres were sought to be understood in terms of old genres, and that literary artefacts were not seen there as creations in the void. A very vague and generalized maxim to the effect that poetry expresses the personality of the poet may be extracted from the writings of some of the English Romantics. But it would be a brave critic indeed who would believe that a "lyric" poem like Shelley's *A Lament* (1821) expressed not only his real feelings, but also that those feelings were permanent, and that the second (concluding) stanza was true and accurate for Shelley's later life too:[28]

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more.

Had Abdul Haq and other Urdu critics had their way, Shelley, on the strength of *A Lament* would have been held out as a poet of unmitigated sadness and frustration at least after 1821. Critics (see Firaq Gorakhpuri and Andalib Shadani above) who could believe *Death by Water to* be a personal poem of loss could believe anything.

A genuine question arises here: After all, the poet does put something in his poem, even if it is mere words. So does his utterance, or his words, give us no clue about his personality?

In order to attempt any coherent answer to this question, we'll first have to decide what we mean by "personality". Caroline Spurgeon, in her *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells us* (1935) had, by offering not unfanciful interpretations of Shakespeare's image-clusters, even tried to determine Shakespeare's likes and dislikes, his habits, his personal experiences, and similar (minor?) details of his personality. But if "personality" is the sum total of a person's genetic inheritance, education, domestic and cultural environment, then it is a moot point if poetry does express it all, and if it does, whether it can be descried by the reader in distant times and climes.

Then there is another question: Even if we do succeed in determining some or even all feature's of the pre-modern Urdu poet's personality, what insights would that information give us that could be relevant to an understanding or appreciation of his poetry? Or let's go the other way round: Let's study the shi'rs in which the poet seems to be speaking of himself. What information would we get about his character and personality from such shi'rs, and how reliable would that information be, never mind its usefulness as a tool for critical assessment of the poetry?

Even a less than close reading of a pre-modern Urdu ghazal poet would make one thing instantly clear: he is not a reliable informant about himself, if at all the word "informant" would apply here. Mushafi (1750-1824) and Mir are notable among our poets for their sensuous and erotic imagery. Both also say things that can be taken as information about their sexual interests. Here are some shi'rs from Mushafi:

Master Mushafi, you didn't miss out on a single lad;
Obviously you are quite a maestro

At your calling.

Well, Mushafi, I am not much of a lover of boys–
But I do have intercourse, more or less
With women kind.

Even if she ever came to hand
I shouldn't be guilty of the wicked deed;
Please oh pure and perfect Lord, Grant me this prayer.

I grant that beardless brats
Do give pleasure in a way, yet one finds
The pleasure of love in females alone.[29]

It is obvious that these shiʽrs are useless as material for a personality profile of Mushafi. In fact, it is easy to see, were one familiar with the principle of *mazmun afirini* (theme creation, that is, finding new themes for poems) that more than anything else, these shi ʽrs are exercises in theme creation. Mir sometimes affords even more telling examples. Here is one:

How could a plain human being
Keep company with such a one?
Impudent, thieving, restless, shallow, rakish, profligate.[30]

This shi ʽr occurs in Mir's fifth Divan, completed perhaps not earlier than 1798 and not later than 1803. Even if the earlier date is taken as more probable, Mir was seventy-five years of age at that time. And if this shi ʽr is based on Mir's real circumstances, we should be bound to conclude that Mir was possessed of a personality that inclined toward what he himself describes as the very dregs of society. And if poetry expresses personality, one may wonder if a poet with such a personality could really have composed those noble shi ʽrs that are the glory of our literature.

Here again, the principle of *mazmun afirini* provides a more reliable key for opening up such texts to us. First and foremost, the pre-modern Urdu poet was engaged upon the business of

finding new themes, or giving new slants to old themes. Mir said:

Your soul free from torment for the mazmun, your heart devoid of pain,
What avails? Even if your visage is paper pale, What avails?[31]

Here the poet's office has been equated with that of the lover or the Sufi, whose heart is tender and full of pain: one should have a heart full of pain, or a soul afflicted with torment, searching for new *mazmuns*, or torment for *mazmuns* not coming at all, or those that came but disappeared before they could be captured in words. One's true station in life is to have a concern in the heart for *mazmuns*, or pain in the heart caused by love. One must have either one or the other, or one's life is profitless. Creation of themes, and not self-revelation, is the proper business of the poet.

The following shi'r occurs in Mir's first Divan, completed before 1752:

I used Rekhta as a veil
over my true utterance;
And now it has been fated
to stay as my art.[32]

This could be just another *mazmun*. But experience has taught me to regard poetics related utterances of pre-modern Urdu poets as genuine statements in literary theory. This is particularly true of the poets who wrote roughly during the century and a half from around 1700 to around 1850 when Urdu's "new" poetics was being developed and refined. I have given an inadequate translation; the keywords here are *sukhan, parda,* and *fan*, translated by me as "utterance", "veil", and "art" respectively. The following other meanings of these words are pertinent here:

sukhan: conversation, speech, poetry, words, discourse

parda: screen, curtain, pretext, covering

fan: artifice, craft, accomplishment, cunning

The word *rekhta* too has more sides than one: the language called *Rekhta*,

the poetry written in that language, the ghazal written in the language called *Rekhta*, or *Hindi*. The basic theory is clear: the accomplishment of poetry conceals, throws a veil over the real utterance, or speech, or poetry, which remains unheard and unrevealed. Poetry veils the true utterance, and dissembling is the true art of the poet. Should this then be taken to mean a confession that one can never express one's true thoughts? Again, my experience of pre-modern Urdu poetry tells me not to do so. The problem of the failure of language is a modern phenomenon; the pre-modern poet was supremely confident in his power to find words for any theme. Mir possessed all *sukhan*, all words, what he didn't have (according to this shi'r) was the desire, or the will, to unveil his words.

So what words could those words be? They could be anything, a declaration of love before the beloved, a mystical, gnomic vision, a proclamation of war upon a world that valued form over meaning, the ritual over the spiritual, illusion over reality. The fact that he doesn't tell us what his real utterance was, or could be, is entirely appropriate: the utterance remains veiled.

So are we fated forever to remain ignorant of the poet's true purpose? My answer is, yes. And it is not such an intolerable state of affairs so long as we can manage to divine all, or at least some, of the poem's true purposes. Trying to discern the poet's true purpose will almost certainly lead us to nothing more than a handful of trivialities. In Mir's third Divan there is a stunning shi'r:

The world is the chessboard, Heaven the Player,
You and I the pieces. Like a true tyro
Heaven's only interest is in taking the pieces.[33]

The cold passion of the tone, the laconic satire, and the telling observation about novice chess players create a dramatic space where distant reverberations sound from a ruba'i attributed to Khayyam, and from *King Lear*, (though the latter should owe entirely to reader/listener for their existence) and where a somewhat conventional theme is transformed into a cosmic dance of death. Added to this is the underlying irony: the sky is conventionally described in Urdu poetry as incredibly old. (That's why it appears "bent", or it is "bent" because it is so old). So there is a new dimension of irony in describing a traditionally ancient being as an abecedarian chess player. What made the shi'r even more memorable to me was another image drawn from the realm of chess, in the following shi'r from the fourth Divan of Mir:[34]

How I wish you had
At least a chess board and pieces around—
Mir is an artful chess-playing companion,
Not a burden upon the heart.

Putting aside the felicity with which Mir made use of two double-rhyming phrases *(bar hai khatir, yar-e shatir)* in a single line, the easy flow of the shi'r, the tongue in cheek humility of the tone, and the polysemy of *yar-e shatir*,[35] I was immediately struck with the chess imagery, and coupled with the previously quoted shi'r from Divan III, it led me to conclude that Mir must have been interested in chess. This happy inference was shattered when some time later I came across the following sentence in chapter II of Sa'di's *Gulistan* (1258): *In the people's service I should be an artful chess playing companion* (yar-e shatir), *not a burden upon the heart* (bar-e khatir).[36]

I ruefully concluded that the only knowledge about the personality of Mir that I could extract from the two shi'rs was that Mir may or may not have been interested in chess, but he knew *Gulistan* better than I did.

Note: All translations from Urdu and Persian have been made by me, unless specified otherwise.

Notes and References

[1] *Zikr-e Mir*, Ed., Maulvi Abdul Haq, Aurangabad, Anjuman Urdu Press, 1928.
[2] *Zikr-i Mir, The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir*, Translated, annotated and with an introduction by C.M.Naim, New Delhi, OUP, 1999, p. 26.
[3] Zikr-i Mir, p. 11.
[4] For an English translation of Azad's account of Mir's life, personality, and poetry, see *Ab-e Hayat*, translated by Frances Pritchett in association with Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, New Delhi , OUP, 2001, pp.185-203.
[5] *Zikr-i Mir*, pp. 4-5. Talking of Mir's appreciation of nature, it might be worth while to mention here that Mir never saw a body of water larger than a small though wide and tumultuous river in North Avadh, variously called the *Sarju*, or the *Ghaghra*. Yet he has written some most hauntingly resonant and richly textured poetry about the ocean or turbulent river waters.
[6] Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols., London, George Allen & Unwin, 1967, 1968, 1969. He doesn't even hint at the circumstances of his divorce with Dora, his second wife, and the endless bickerings and bitterness, and his own obduracy over the divorce settlement. Or consider, for example, Russell's laconic remark about his divorce with his third wife Patricia ("Peter") Spence. Russell says, "When, in 1949, my wife decided that she wanted no more of me, our marriage came to an end"(Vol. 3, p. 16). For fuller information one has had to wait for Monk's *Bertrand Russell, The Ghost of Madness*, 1914-*1970*. (Free Press, 2000). But there is no denying the fact that while Russell gives little information about the divorces, whatever he does give is true.
[7] Ralph Russell, and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 96-97.
[8] William Wordsworth, "Preface to The Lyrical Ballads, Second Edition, 1800", in Edmund D. Jones, Ed., *English Critical Essays of the Nineteenth Century*, London, OUP, 1919, p. 26. Earlier in this Preface, Wordsworth said, "The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions" (p.21). Doubtless, in his long essay Wordsworth had hedged his bets in several subtle ways, but the glitter of his grand propositions so dazzled our theory makers that they didn't stop to read the fine print.
[9] It is curious that practically none of our early twentieth-century critics could see their way to making the elementary distinction between the "poet/author", and the "protagonist" or "speaker" or "narrator" in a she'r. The initiator of the literalism which effected this conflation was the great Altaf Husain Hali in his famous *Muqaddama-e shi'r o Sha'iri* (1893). Such conflation is entirely repugnant to the principle of *mazmun afirini*. Failure to distinguish the protagonist from the poet/author also resulted in the failure to differentiate between

metaphorical (or "false") statements and non-metaphorical (or "true") statements. Shibli No'mani, despite his disapproval of what he thought was "excessive metaphoricity" in the Indian Persian poetry of the Mughal period, astutely noted that in this poetry metaphor was treated as true in the literal sense, and was then made the basis of more metaphor making. See Shibli No'mani, *Shi'rul 'Ajam*, Vol. III, Azamgarh, Ma'arif Press, 1956, p. 20, "They treated the literal [=idiomatic, accepted] meaning of the word as real, and made it the foundation of their *mazmun*". Also see *Shi'rul 'Ajam*, Vol. V, Azamgarh, Ma'arif Press, 1957, p. 76, where he discusses the extension of the beloved-as-murderer metaphor in Persian poetry. Shadani doesn't mention Shibli at all, but quotes Hali *in extenso*, or paraphrases him freely.

[10] Andalib Shadani, *Daur-e Hazir aur Urdu Ghazalgo'i*, Delhi, Parvez Book Depot, 1945(?), pp. 14, 12-13.

[11] Shadani, p. 28.

[12] Shadani, pp. 39-40.

[13] Shadani, pp.61-65.

[14] Nurul Hasan Hashmi, *Dihli ka Dabistan-e Sha'iri*; Abul Lais Siddiqi, *Lakhna'u ka Dabistan-e Sha'iri;* Hashmi's book first came out in the 1950's, Siddiqi's in the sixties. Both have remained popular. These works bring to their logical conclusion the ideas about "natural" and "authentic" poetry introduced by Hali (1893), then Abdus Salam Nadvi (1926), and Andalib Shadani. For a good discussion of what these people meant by "Delhi-ness" and "Lucknow-ness" in the context of Urdu poetry, see Carla Petievich, *Assembly of Rivals: Delhi, Lucknow and the Urdu Ghazal*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1992, pp. 13-25.

[15] Quoted in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1993, p.1225.

[16] For character sketches of Nasikh and Atash by Muhammad Husain Azad, see Frances Pritchett and the present writer's translation of *Ab-e Hayat*, pp. 279-84 (Nasikh), and 311-12, 17 (Atash).

[17] Here are two of my favourites, from the first 15 pages:

I'll now bring back your picture
Before you, and
I'll clasp it to my breast,
I'll kiss it.

Arm under the head, last night
She went to sleep with me.
It was so comfy, my arm
Went to sleep.

See *Gauhar-e Intikhab*, by Amir Mina'i, Rampur, Ra'isul Matabi', 1873, pp. 10, 15.

[18] "Mir Sahib Ka Ek Khas Rang", by Andalib Shadani, in his *Tahqiq ki Raushni Men*, Lahore, Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1963; originally published in the *Saqi*, Delhi, October, 1940. Shadani's and Russell's conclusions on Mir's love poetry

have been well and searchingly examined by Frances W. Pritchett in her "Convention in Classical Urdu Ghazal: The Case of Mir", in *The Journal of South Asian & Middle Eastern Studies,* 3,1, (Fall 1979), pp. 60-77.

[19] Maulvi Abdul Haq, *Intikhab...*, Delhi, Anjuman Taraqqi-e Urdu (Hind), 1945 [1929], pp. 16, 31.

[20] Majnun Gorakhpuri, "Mir aur Ham", in M. Habib Khan, Ed., *Afkar-e Mir*, Delhi, Abdul Haq Academy, 1996 [1967], p. 196. Majnun Gorakhpuri's essay was first published in the 1940's.

[21] Maulvi Abdul Haq, *Intikhab*, p. 32.

[22] Mir, *Kulliyat, Vol. I,* Ed., Zill-e Abbas Abbasi, Delhi, Ilmi Majlis, 1968, p. 616. The she'r occurs in the Fourth Divan, composed before 1794, though after 1785.

[23] Majnun Gorakhpuri, "Mir aur Ham", in M. Habib Khan, p. 191.

[24] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, pp. 138 (Divan I), 145 (Divan I), 237 (Divan I), 584 (Divan III), 620 (Divan IV), 623 (Divan IV).

[25] Georges de Scudery, "The Preface to *Ibrahim (selections)*", in Allan H. Gilbert, Ed., *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, Detroit, Wayne University Press, 1964, [1940], pp. 580-81.

[26] Henry Fielding, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews & His Friend Mr Abraham Adams*, Penguin Edition, 1954, pp. 17-18.

[27] Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, New York, Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966, p. 501.

[28] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Selected Poems*, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Edmund Blunden, London and Glasgow, Collins, 1965. There are also other, somewhat different versions of the poem. I give the one that is considered most acceptable.

[29] Shaikh Ghulam Hamadani Mushafi, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Nurul Hasan Naqvi, Lahore, Majlis Taraqqi-e Adab, Divan I, 1968, pp. 515, 225, Divan III, 1971, p. 65, Divan IV, 1974, p. 56.

[30] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, p. 726.

[31] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, p. 649, Divan IV.

[32] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, p. 132.

[33] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, p. 604.

[34] Mir, *Kulliyat*, Ed., Abbasi, p. 680.

[35] This phrase has at least the following meanings: a friend or companion who is (1) an expert chess-player, (2) extremely clever and artful, (3) swift in speed (as a messenger or runner, or one who walks with the master's mount), (4) deceitful, (5) roguish and unreliable, (6) wanton. The Arabic root *shin, toe, ra,* also means "to go away from, to withdraw from."

[36] Sa'di Shirazi, *Gulistan*, Kanpur, Matba'-e Majidi, 1909, p. 68.

THE POWER POLITICS OF CULTURE: AKBAR ILAHABADI AND THE CHANGING ORDER OF THINGS

Most of us are familiar with the main circumstances of Akbar Ilahabadi's life. So I'll recapitulate them here but briefly. Born Syed Akbar Husain in 1846 at village Bara in the trans-Jamna area of Allahabad district, young Akbar received his early education from Syed Tafazzul Husain, his father. They came from a family of Sayyids that had long settled in that part of the country. Conservative, middle class, and proud, they had preserved their traditions of classical learning, but were not in the most prosperous of circumstances. Akbar Husain was obliged in 1863 to find clerical employment with the builders who had contracted to bridge the Jamna not far from his native village. In the mean time, he acquired a good knowledge of English at home and sat the Lower Courts' Advocates' examination in 1867. He cleared that examination without difficulty and in 1869 he was appointed *Nai'b Tahsildar*, a comparatively low grade Revenue Dept appointment under the British. He soon quit that job to sit the High Court Advocates' examination. He passed that examination too without difficulty and enrolled as a lawyer at the High Court of Allahabad. In 1880 he was appointed *Munsif* (a medium grade Judge). He progressed steadily to become a Sessions Judge in 1894, then acting District Judge at Banaras. In 1898 the British made him *Khan Bahadur.* It was a highly regarded title, considered just below that of a Knight of the Empire. He took retirement in 1903, and settled to a life of

poetry and semi-reclusive comfort, though beset by poor eyesight, in a vast house built by him near the Kotwali in Allahabad.

Toward the end of his life he was much attracted by Gandhi and his movement for political independence and Hindu-Muslim unity. He wrote a long series of poems called *Gandhi Nama* (Gandhi's Book) to embody his ideas on these matters. He died in 1921, at the peak of his reputation as a powerful, socially and politically engaged voice on the Indian literary scene.

1.

Akbar has had a bad press over the past five decades or so. He had immense prestige and a commanding reputation during his lifetime. A list of his friends and admirers reads like an Indian Who's Who of the decades between 1880 and 1920. Despite Akbar's bitter opposition to his ideas and agenda, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan liked and respected him so much as to have had him transferred to Aligarh so as to be better able to enjoy his company. Iqbal once wrote about a shi'r of Akbar's that it encapsulated the central idea of Hegel's philosophy, "compressing Hegel's ocean into a drop."[1] Madan Mohan Malaviya had him write poems on Hindu-Muslim unity.[2]

Akbar's poetry remained popular, or perhaps gained even more admirers and adherents over the score or so years following his death. His *Kulliyat* (Collected Works) was brought out in three volumes by his son after Akbar's death. The first volume had run into eleven printings by 1936. The second saw seven printings by 1931, and the third was printed five times by 1940. Yet things are very different today. The *Gandhi Nama* (1919-1921) was printed only once, in 1948, and has long been out of print. A modern edition of the *Kulliyat* exists, but it is by no means an authoritative or scholarly edition. The National Council for the Promotion of Urdu proposes to bring out a comprehensive, though not critical and

scholarly edition now. Akbar's fame as our greatest satirical poet remains un dented, but his readership has declined and he has been almost uniformly criticised by Urdu critics for what is seen as his opposition to Progress, Science, and the Modern Way of living and thinking.

There are at least two more reasons– one literary and the other non-literary– for Akbar's rough treatment, I almost said ill treatment, at the hands of our critics. The literary reason is the lowly place that comic and satirical verse occupied in the literary canon in the eyes of Urdu critics. Doubtless, Urdu has an immensely rich tradition of such verse, but Urdu critics of the early part of the twentieth century were brought up to believe in Matthew Arnold's dictum of "high seriousness" being the ineluctable quality of poetry. I well remember my chagrin and the feeling of being let down when as a young student of English literature nearly half a century ago I read Arnold's pronouncement that Dryden and Pope were the classics of English prose, not of English poetry. Even if my teachers didn't entirely endorse this opinion, they unhesitatingly held Dryden to be a poet of the second rank. This, coupled with the strictures of Muhammad Husain Azad about the satirical and scurrilous poetry of eighteenth century Urdu poets, especially Sauda (1706-1781) as offensive to good taste[3], was enough to make Urdu critics suspicious of all satiric and comic verse. Even Akbar's passionate engagement with political and social questions in his poetry wasn't enough to redeem his position. It would be a rare Urdu critic today who would put Akbar among the first ten Urdu poets.

The other reason has to do with the obvious cleavage between Akbar's life and political opinions. In his poetry he presents himself as an implacable enemy of all things British. Yet he himself was a fairly senior member of the British official establishment and was apparently quite proud of the high regard in which Thomas Burn, one time Chief Secretary to the Government of U.P. held him[4]. He even wrote an

adulatory *qasida* on the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria (1887) at the request of "Mr. Howell, Judge"[5]. He sent his son Ishrat Husain to England for higher education and on his return suffered him to enter the civil service under the Government of U.P. as Deputy Collector. All this sits ill with the fiery scorn and burning rage that he pours over the British and the West and their admirers.

It is possible that Akbar was aware of the contradiction. Perhaps this sense of duality makes his denunciatory voice so much more vehement, his disavowal of Western and British mores and systems so much more passionate. Certainly, he knew that no one could really swim against the current, but the tragedy according to him was that those who swam with the current were drowned. The Indian, in trying to fashion himself like a modern [British] creature, gave up his past, his traditions, his belief systems, but could not really become the modern Western individual that Macaulay had expected him to become. The following verse is poignant in its tragic bitterness: [6]

They became votaries of the Time
And made their style as that of the West.
In their ardent desire for a second birth
They committed suicide.

The Urdu original has a powerful ambiguity owing to a peculiarity of our grammar which permits sentence construction without an overt subject. So the original can be read as having any or all four of the subjects: I, You, They, We. In a longer poem he expresses the same dilemma with a sense of personal defeat and loss, though the protagonist of this poem too could well subsume the whole Muslim community: [7]

Akbar, if I stick to the old ways
Sayyid tells me plain: This hue
Is now sleazy. And if I adopt
The new style, my own people raise

A Babel of hoots and shouts.
Moderation? It doesn't exist
Here or there. All have stretched their legs
Beyond all limits. One side insists
One mustn't touch even a lemonade
Bottle; the other side keen
To summon the Saki, "Hey! A stoup of wine!"
One side regards as unclean
The whole book of management,
Skill, and sound policy. For the other,
The bag of English mail is God's own word.
Majnun's soul suffers from double trial:
Laila's company and separation both
Are catastrophic.

Hostile critics (and nearly all of Akbar's modern critics are hostile) ignore poems such as these, and stress only those which according to them show him up as a blind, unreasoning hater of the New Light, or deliberately perverse in his backwardness and love for a past that was generally unsavoury, and in any case dead or dying. And these are the views not of those alone who might have regarded the British rule as a blessing, or a stage in the march of historical forces, but also of those who were out of sympathy with the Raj.

The sub text, and sometimes the explicit strain in most modern criticism of Akbar is that he may have been a good poet of satire and may have been extremely popular in his day, but the values, ideas and ideals that Akbar upheld as valuable suffered a decisive defeat in his lifetime itself. Thus when the values that provide the prop of belief and conviction to his poetry are gone, his poetry must inevitably make room for others. Akbar's negative agenda and therefore his poetry, critics say, can have no strength or validity in the modern age.

The logical flaw in this reasoning is that the defeat or rout of the group, party, or ideas targeted by a satirist necessarily

makes the satire invalid or obsolete. No satirical text from Aristophanes through the Arab polemical and poems and individual lampoons to the poems and prose of Swift and Jafar Zatalli would be intelligible or alive today if the satire died with its subject. Another point to be noted here is that Akbar's attitude toward the issues of his day, and especially towards issues of "progress" was not so unilinear and uncomplicated as his critics would like us to believe. He is very complex poet and he cannot be read like the morning newspaper. In addition, all of Akbar's fears and dire predictions were not just the fancies of a diehard conservative.

Akbar was in fact one of the few to realize at that time in our history that Syed Ahmad Khan's reformist schemes had much in common with Macaulay's agenda. The "Indian Renaissance" was really a powerful current of shallow modernization. The Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh had very little "Anglo" and even less "Oriental" about it. For all his learning and good intentions, Syed Ahmad Khan wasn't equipped to create a unified system of scientific inquiry and religious faith. How different was closeness to the British from being subserviently tied to the coat-tails of the British is a question that may have occurred to many, but aside from Akbar there is no one in our cultural history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who articulated this question so relentlessly and pointed up to fact that it was mere wishful thinking to believe that the two were substantively different.

Soon after he became a judge of the High Court at Allahabad, Syed Mahmood, the son of Syed Ahmad Khan, finding that Indian judges of High Court were allowed pay and privileges inferior to those of the British judges, submitted a memorandum to Government, demanding that for the purpose of pay, perquisites, and conditions of service, he should be treated on par with British judges. He based his claim not on the principle of equity and fair play, but on the fact that he was

to all intents and purposes, an Englishman by virtue of his long sojourn in England, his English education, and his complete absorption of the English language, culture and customs[8]. Akbar, who was himself in the Judicial Service of U.P. at that time, would have known or heard of this and would have felt his worst fears realized in the conduct and the mindset of Syed Mahmood. He would also have known or heard of the later intransigencies of Syed Mahmood, and the arrogant hostility to him of his Chief Justice, John Edge. Syed Mahmood was ultimately obliged to leave his judgeship. All this would have amply vindicated Akbar in his own eyes. No wonder that his short poem on the death of Syed Mahmood in 1903 is briefly elegiac and has a bitter triumphalism:

Neither Theodore Beck remains now
Nor does Sir Syed; a sigh arises
From the hearts of friends. There was
Some consolation so long as Mahmood
Was there. Today he too departed this world
For paradise. Admonition, weeping, said:
To your senses! Oh you who are greedy
For pomp and power and splendour,
Obliterated is the stamp of Ahmad and Mahmood
"There's no God but God" is all
That remains.[9]

Akbar's contradictions thus were of his age. Moreover, there is no doubt that toward the end of his life he was groping toward a resolution of his inner paradoxes. He was, in the idiom of the age, a "government servant" and then a "pensioner judge" for most of his life, and didn't find it in himself to express himself openly in support of Gandhi and the freedom movement, though he never ceased to attack the British and their government and their cooperationists in no uncertain terms. A poet, after all, is not expected to wield a stick or lead a suicide brigade. Many years before Gandhi *Nama* he wrote in two separate verses:[10]

Were Akbar not the Government's concubine,
You would find him too among Gandhi's gopis.

For him Akbar uses the word *madkhulah*, which means exactly what I say in translation: a kept woman. For Gandhi's followers, he uses the word *gopi* which means one of the myriad legendary female lovers of Sri Krishna, and suggests the extraordinary, almost superhuman charisma that Gandhi possessed. There are other meanings too, but I'll only one here: Akbar sees Gandhi as the principle of fecundity and creative liberation, and India as the female principle, to be fecundated by Gandhi. Now the other shi'r: [11]

Little Buddhu too is with
The Honourable Mr Gandhi; though he is
But a pinch of dust on the road
He is the storm's companion.[12]

"Little Buddhu" (*Buddhu Mian)* is one of Akbar's favourite metaphors for the Indian Muslim. Maulana Muhammad Ali is reported to have been slightly miffed at this shi'r, suspecting that "Buddhu Mian" here stood for him, and that Akbar was making gentle fun of him. Akbar is reported to have disabused Muhammad Ali of this notion. There is a shi'r in *Gandhi Nama* which suggests that here "Buddhu Mian" was none other than Akbar himself: [13]

The word "Buddhu" was actually
A matter of prudence,
What I actually meant it to mean
Is hidden in my heart.

Akbar didn't let *Gandhi Nama* see the light of the day. He is reported by Maulvi Qamaruddin Ahmad to have candidly admitted that he didn't have the fortitude to oppose the Government, and that he was concerned about his son getting into trouble because of his nationalistic poetry. Nor did he have the physical health and strength to stand the hardships of the jail.[14] Yet in the poem he lets himself go, putting the following

shi'r as its epigraph, declaring Firdausi's great epic *Shah Nama* (The Book of Kings) to be obsolete and abrogated:

The revolution is here:
It's a new world, a new tumult,
The Book of Kings *is done*
It's the age of The Book of Gandhi *now.*[15]

Akbar was strongly conscious of the immense fascination that the culture of the politically victorious has for the politically vanquished. As numerous examples in contemporary life and letters amply demonstrated, the vanquished people could be made to unconsciously strive for identification with the ruling elite by the insertion of popular and powerful icons of alien culture into their day to day life. The pulls and counter-pulls exerted themselves as much, if not more, through culture as through politics. Akbar's great insight was his early identification of the colonizer's culture with his politics, his administration, and his regulations. That's why he replied through his poetry, traditionally the greatest cultural weapon that one could command in the Indo-Muslim society. That's why he equates his *Gandhi Nama,* a series of short or very short and politically overt poems with *Shah Nama*, a literary masterpiece of an entirely different kind.

It's fashionable today for us to talk of cultural and economic colonization of the third world by the capitalist-imperialist West in a post-colonial scenario. For all its trendiness, this notion of the cultural hegemony of the West represents hard realities on the ground level in countries like India. Akbar was perhaps the first to appreciate the political power of cultural icons:

Though Europe has great
Capability to do war,
Greater still is her power
To do business. They cannot everywhere
Install a gun, but the soap

Made by Pears is everywhere.[16]

Improved means of communication go side by side with improved ways of doing business, and new ways of loving and living:[17]

Nowhere now the hands
Of frenzied love tear at the collar
Separating thread from thread;
Now it's Majnun's hands, and the Pioneer,
And news despatched by wire.
Shirin has contracted to supply milk
At the commisariat; and Farhad
Is building a railroad through the mountain.

***

Lovers of peris are now
Enchanted by the Ms,
Frenzy once made them rip their clothes
They're now sewing blazers.[18]

***

I took her to bed, and then
Took my leave, saying:
"Thank you."[19]

3.

The mode of British rule in India was often described by the British civil servants themselves as the rule of law, and benevolent, though despotic. One of the chief methods of despotism, however benevolent, is pronounced propensity for over-regulation. Akbar regarded the constricting effect of the British over-regulation as cultural invasion inasmuch as it forced the people to change their lifestyles. He often uses the English word "License"as a metaphor for the over-regulation:

Eyes
Watching every step,
License
Demanded at every turn,
Oh Akbar, I finally gave up strolling

In the park.[20]

***

Just the license is enough
To give you honour on the road,
Just have a license on you,
Put away the sword.[21]

***

Don't ask: "Are you Piru, or
Are you Harbans?" Whatever
This slave is, he is
Without license.[22]

In Akbar's changing world there is not just the sense of loss at things which are gone. The vanquished and subjugated Indian, becoming a part of the colonial administrative system, tries to out-Herod Herod, and shows himself up as even more oppressive than the British benevolent despot:

When buttons were stitched onto the waist-wrap
And western pants grew out of the dhoti,
A corporal and six was posted at every tree,
And a law sprouted in every field.[23]

Where Akbar's poetry has seemed most annoying to modern critics is his apparent rejection of even such obviously useful and progressive things as running water supplied to homes through pipes, the printing press, the newspaper, and the railway train. A casual reading would indeed leave us puzzled, or sad, at Akbar's refusal to permit, far less welcome, even such essentials of modern life and enlightened living. But Akbar was not in fact protesting against the signs of progress: he was protesting against the signs of enslavement and the destruction of Indian cultural values and lifestyles that such enslavement guaranteed above the putative guarantee of progress and improvement in the quality of life. He also saw water tax and muck and stagnating puddles and pollution accompanying piped water. He saw the disappearance of water

and wells, and river water as a sequel of the establishment of water works in the cities:

The plague, and the fever, the bug and the mosquito
All are nurtured in the muck
That surrounds the municipal tap;
The flow from the municipal tap
Is something, cleanliness is
Something else again.[24]

***

Tears are such great things:
They do good to the heart's tillage,
Water tax is now proposed
To be levied on the weeping eye.[25]

***

Is it the flow and surge
Of civilization or the deluge?
What need there is for the tap
When there's a well in the house?[26]

The symbolism of the domestic well whose water is native, pure, and controlled, against the municipal tap that supplies water to homes and street corners need not be laboured. What is more important to my mind is the cultural import that the change portended for Akbar. Those of us who are familiar, and I expect everybody is, with our folk songs about Krishna and Krishna's *gopis* at the well or river bank, and with songs of drawing and conveying home the water from wells and rivers in general will easily appreciate the feeling of cultural loss, the sense of desecration and denigration of community values and lifestyle that commercially controlled and supplied water would have produced in the mind of anyone sensitive to those values.

The well was not just a well, the river not just a river in the Indian mind. For one thing, well water and river water was free. Even in the village where caste segregation was common,

those who were entitled to draw water from a well did so without payment, without let or hindrance. Then, both quality and quantity of the water were within reasonable power of the drawer: it wasn't like the impersonal, unknown source from which the tap water came, and on which there was no control of the consumer in terms of quantity and flow. Lastly but perhaps most importantly, there was the religious, social and cultural value of the well and the river as a locus for emotional and spiritual commerce.

How important the well was in even large cities like Delhi is well reflected in Ghalib's letters. In a letter of 1860/1861 addressed to Mir Mehdi Majruh, Ghalib wrote: [27]

> Qari's well has dried up. All the wells at Lal Diggi have suddenly become entirely brackish. So one could somehow drink the brackish water, but those wells now yield only hot water. Yesterday I rode out into the city to inquire into the state of the wells....In brief, the city has become a wilderness. And now, if the wells disappear and fresh water becomes rare like a pearl, this city will turn into the wilderness of Karbala.

Such was the state of Delhi after the destruction of buildings and monuments carried out by the British after they reoccupied Delhi in September 1857, and the demolitions effected by them in 1859-1861 in the name of modernization and progress. Tap water couldn't replace all the wells, and wasn't tax free like well water anyway. The drying out or the disappearance of wells was not just inconvenience, it was the prelude to a new kind of dependency, a new kind of life where water could not be drawn at will, but had to be awaited; the taps must flow for the water to reach the people. It was no longer a natural resource, but a man made artefact.

Rivers were even stronger sources of cultural strength and continuity in India. Water from different rivers was believed to have different properties and was valued in terms of both sactity and salubriousness. It was not unknown for people to hand carry on their travels the water from the Ganga, or any

other river that they favoured. Even a hard headed Sultan like Muhammad Tughlaq (r. 1325-1351) had his favourite river water carried to him every day a thousand miles away to the Deccan.[28] Akbar invariably drank Ganga water, and it was carried to him every day regardless of distance when he was far from the river itself. Abul Fazl tells us about waters from other rivers used in Akbar's kitchen and other establishments.[29]

Nearer our time and place, here is Ghalib, eloquently praising the water of the river near Rampur:[30]

> How can I have the tongue to thank God for the water? There is a river, called Kosi. Holy is the Lord! Kosi's water is so sweet that anyone who drank it could imagine it was a lightly sweetened drink: clean, light, easy on the system, digestive, quick to be absorbed in the body.
>
> ***
>
> The water, Holy is the Lord! There is a river just three hundred steps from the city. It's called Kosi. Doubtless some underground current from the stream of the Elixir of Life is a tributary of it. Well, even if such is the case, the Elixir only extends life, it could never be so sweet.

It is the loss of these protocols and being deprived of these waters and their cultural reverberations that Akbar lamented:[31]

Obliged to drink water from the tap
And to read texts set in type,
Suffering from the flux
And conjunctivitis; Help!
Oh Good King Edward, help!

The supreme irony of the appeal to King Edward VII is too good to need comment. The protest against typesetting the reading material is not just because the small type faces were small and harder to read than books calligraphed by expert calligraphers. The matter had to do more with mass production and quality control. In the pre-print age, one often commissioned books to be copied by a calligrapher, and one generally supervised the job personally. On account of the one

time nature of the work, the calligrapher could ensure uniformity of style, ink, and general lay out of the work that he was producing. More important, the copier or the commissioner made sure, at least in theory, of an error free .copy. With the advent of the printing press and mass production, errors became extremely numerous, for the quality control ensured by the author/commissioner's personal supervision was no longer there. The author/commissioner of the printed work had no real control over it, but was still held liable for the numerous errors that printed texts now routinely contained.

Ghalib, who tried to maintain a measure of quality control during the printing of some of his works. His letters on that subject reflect his concern, and his anguish over the printer's excesses:

> Let the ink be bright black, and uniform throughout", Ghalib pleads to Har Gopal Tafta who was supervising the printing of *Dastanbu.*[32] Now this is about an edition of his Urdu Divan. I saw each and every proof. The calligrapher/proof maker was someone different from the middleman who used to bring the proofs to me. Now I find that all the errors are just as they were. That is, the proof corrector didn't incorporate the corrections at all.[33]

In a letter to Junun Barelvi Ghalib laments that people blame him for typos, and "do not envisage the possibility of error in printed texts. The poor author is indicted for the calligrapher/proof reader's mistakes."[34]

Thus in his mock-protest against the typeset text, Akbar is actually protesting against the culture of mass production which lowers aesthetic standards, makes coldly impersonal what once was a work of art and mindlessly permits errors to proliferate. It is for these reasons that Akbar dislikes photographs and the phonograph: they separate the subject from his/her attribute. Printed photographs are worse, for they are copies of a copy:

Now what occasion could there be
For me to boast of my album?
Your photograph has now become
All too cheap: Even the painter cannot
Have a sight of you. From just a photo
Are now your pictures made.[35]

***

Why wonder if my friends
Are parted from me; in the age
Of the phonograph, the voice
Is parted from the throat.[36]

A similar tension, or perhaps even worse, prevails with the telephone, for not only is it impersonal, but in permitting avoidance of eye contact, it makes refusal easy:

Now how could one hope
For the eye of compassion, when
The telephone is the only
Means of conversation?[37]

Akbar saw the newspaper too as a weapon of cultural invasion. He equated British business with British information. Worse still, by virtue of it being a vehicle for the promotion of commerce through advertisement and aggressive salesmanship, the newspaper was also a medium of disinformation. It was culturally deleterious in other ways too: it had immense even if false prestige and made Indians eager to be seen in print on its pages:

Real goods are those that are made in Europe,
Real matter is that which is printed in the Pioneer.[38]

***

Okay, so give me nothing from your purse,
But please do print my name in the paper;
Whomever you look for, you find them
Settled at the door of the Pioneer:
For God's sake, Sir, do print me on some page!

The true state is not hidden
From the eyes of the world;
Print in the paper whatever you please.[39]

***

I have now no desire for Paradise and its Lote tree
Nor do I long for the heavenly spring of Kausar,
I lust only for publication
In the Pioneer.[40]

***

Give me too a couple of pages from the paper
But not the one that contains medicine ads.[41]

This last one is particularly interesting. With characteristic astuteness Akbar notes that the newspaper, in printing advertisements, in fact deviates from its true function. Early newspapers in England were nothing more than accounts of parliamentary debates. It was only in the nineteenth century, in the shadow of the industrial revolution and because of the vast blue collar readership that the revolution spawned, that newspapers began to contain "sensational" news stories and reports of crimes, criminal trials, and similar juicy stuff. Advertisements came still later, when the industrial revolution led to the assembly line and mass production and glut. Thus the newspaper, from being a politically educative text, became a player in big business and aggressive salesmanship.

It seems that the feeling that the newspaper was not the proper place or medium for advertisements was shared by a number of Indians in the nineteenth century. Ratan Nath Sarshar's *Fasana-e Azad* (1880) is a serio-comic story of the picaresque type in four volumes. It is not a text notable for being in sympathy with what the author apparently saw as the effete Indo-Muslim culture of the nineteenth century. We find a friend of Azad, the main character, disapproving the appearance of a "Situations Vacant" in a newspaper and Azad explaining to him the uses of the newspaper:

Bahar: May God grant you success. But say listen, is this not a newspaper? If so, what occasion could there be in it for complications like vacancies, emoluments, applications? A newspaper should contain accounts of battles and wars, or discussion and disputation on matters scientific and political and not such kinds of complications and fuss.
Azad: Then my dear Sir, you never did read a newspaper. Revered Master, a newspaper is an admixture of fragrances. It is the young people's tutor, affectionate adviser to the youth, touchstone of the experience of old men, chief member of the government, friend to the businessman, loyal companion to the manufacturer, advocate of the people, ambassador of the public at large, adviser to policy makers, a column full of banter about the affairs of the country, another column full of disputation on social matters, brilliant poems on some page, notices and advertisements on another. English newspapers have things of myriad varieties and native papers imitate them.[42]

Needless to say, here Azad is the modern man: he revels in the salesmanship, the jack-of-all-tradeness, and the lack of privacy (note the bit about tutoring and advising the young and the very young), that marks the newspaper. It is for him a replacement for education and a desirable engine of mind control. Moreover, those are precisely the reasons for Akbar's disapproval of the newspaper.

The newspaper for Akbar is essentially a materialistic device. (note the "this worldliness" of the typical newspaper's contents listed by Azad's friend above). Its main purpose is not education, but furtherance of business, and administrative and business interests of the colonizer. An even stronger embodiment of the cultural /political/economic idea was the railway engine, and the goods train:

Oh Akbar, those who place
Their faith and trust in the
Goods train, what fear
Could they have of an overload of sin?[43]

***

Notes & References

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[1] Iqbal's letter to Akbar Ilahabadi, dated Decmber 17, 1914, in *Kulliyat-i Makatib-e Iqbal*, Vol. I, Ed., Muzaffar Husain Barani, New Delhi, Delhi Urdu Academy, 1991, p. 320.

[2] Akbar Ilahabadi, *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p.154.

3. "[C]losing the eyes of modesty and opening the mouth of shamelessness he [Sauda] said such wild things that even Satan would ask for a truce." Muhammad Husain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat,* Trs. Frances Pritchett in association with Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, New Delhi, OUP, 2001, p.153.

[4] Akbar , *Kulliyat,* Vol. III, p. 157.

[5] Akbar, *Kulliyat,* Vol. I, pp. 207-08.

[6] Akbar, *Kulliyat,* Vol. II, p. 30.

[7] Akbar, *Kulliyat,* Vol. I, pp. 161-62.

[8] See David Lelyveld, "Macaulay's Curse: Sir Syed and Syed Mahmood" in A.A.Ansari, Ed., *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, A Centenary Tribute,* Delhi, Adam Publications, 2001.

[9] Akbar, *Kulliyat,* Vol. I, p. 185.

[10] Akbar, *Kulliyat,*

[11] Akbar, *Kulliyat.* Also see *Gandhi Nama,* Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1948, p. *ye.*

[12] Akbar, *Kulliyat.* Also see *Gandhi Nama,* Allahabad, Kitabistan, 1948, p. *ye.*

[13] Akbar, *Gandhi Nama, p. ye,* p. 45.

[14] Akbar, *Gandhi Nama,* p. *vao.*

[15] Akbar, *Gandhi Nama,* p. 1.

[16] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 63.

[17] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 68.

[18] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 15.

[19] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 54, "Thank you" in English in the original.

[20] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 94.

[21] *Kulliyat*, Vol. I, p. 255.

[22] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 84.

[23] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 19.

[24] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p.12.

[25] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 85.

[26] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 13.

[27] Khaliq Anjum, Ed., *Ghalib ke Khutut*, Vol. II, New Delhi, The Ghalib Institute, 1985, p. 524.

[28] See

[29] Abul Fazl. I am obliged to Professor N. R. Farooqi, of the University of Allahabad, for the information about Muhammad Tughlaq, and the citation from Abul Fazl.

[30] Letter dated February 1860, to Hakim Ghulafm Najaf Khan, and letter dated February 1860, to Mir Mehdi Majruh, in Khaliq Anjum, Ed., *Ghalib ke Khutut,* Vol. II, pp. 630, 517.

[31] *Kulliyat*, Vol. I, p. 239.

[32] Letter dated September 7, 1858, in *Ghalib ke Khutut*, Vol. I, 1984, p. 292.

[33] Letter dated August 8, 1861, to Mir Mehdi Majruh, in *Ghalib ke Khutut,* Vol. II, Ed. Khaliq Anjum, 1985, p. 521.

[34] Letter dated May 8, 1864, in *Ghalib ke Khutut,* Vol. IV, Ed., Khaliq Anjum, 1993, p. 1511.

[35] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 20.

[36] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 10.

[37] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 17.

[38] *Kulliyat*, Vol. II, p. 62.

[39] *Kulliyat*, Vol. I, p. 254.

[40] *Kulliyat*, Vol. I, p. 226.

[41] *Kulliyat*, Vol.

[42] Ratan Nath Sarshar, *Fasana-e Azad*, Vol. I, New Delhi, National Council for the Promotion of Urdu, 1986, p. 163, [1880].

[43] *Kulliyat*, Vol. III, p. 8.

Appendix

مرید دہر ہوئے وضع مغربی کر لی
نئے جنم کی تمناً میں خود کشی کر لی

(کلیات، جلد دوم، ص 30)

قدیم وضع پہ قائم رہوں اگر اکبر
تو صاف کہتے ہیں سید یہ رنگ ہے میلا
جدید طرز اگر اختیار کرتا ہوں
خود اپنی قوم مچاتی ہے شور و واویلا

جو اعتدال کی کہیئے تو وہ ادھر نہ ادھر
زیادہ حد سے دئیے سب نے پاؤں ہیں پھیلا
ادھر یہ ضد ہے کہ لمنیڈ بھی چھو نہیں سکتے
ادھر یہ دھن ہے کہ ساقی صراحی مے لا
ادھر ہے دفتر تدبیر و مصلحت ناپاک
ادھر ہے وحی ولایت کی ڈاک کا تھیلا
غرض دو گونہ عذاب است جان مجنوں را
بلائے صحبت لیلی و فرقت لیلی

(کلیات، جلد اول، ص 162/161)

واہ کیا راہ دکھائی ہے ہمیں مرشد نے
کر دیا کعبے کو گم اور کلیسا نہ ملا
رنگ چہرے کا تو کالج نے بھی رکھا قائم
رنگ باطن میں مگر باپ سے بیٹا نہ ملا
سید اٹھے جو گزٹ لے کے تو لاکھوں لائے
شیخ قرآن دکھاتے پھرے پیسہ نہ ملا

(کلیات، جلد اول، ص 1)

ہماری باتیں ہی باتیں ہیں سید کام کرتا تھا
نہ بھولو فرق جو ہے کہنے والے کرنے والے میں
کہے جو چاہے کوئی میں تو یہ کہتا ہوں اے اکبر
خدا بخشے بہت سی خوبیاں تھیں مرنے والے میں

(کلیات، جلد اول، ص 199)

نہ وہ بک رہ گئے نہ سر سید　　　　دل احباب سے نکلتی ہے آہ

ذات محمود سے تسلی تھی — لی انھوں نے بھی آج خلد کی راہ
بولی عبرت کہ ہوش میں آؤ — اے حریصان شان و شوکت و جاہ
مٹ گیا نقش احمد و محمود — رہ گیا لا الٰہ الا اللہ

(کلیات، جلد اول، ص 185)

مدخولۂ گورمنٹ اکبر اگر نہ ہوتا
اس کو بھی آپ پاتے گاندھی کی گوپیوں میں

(بزم اکبر، ص 185)

بدھو میاں بھی حضرت گاندھی کے ساتھ ہیں
گو خاک راہ ہیں مگر آندھی کے ساتھ ہیں

(بزم اکبر، ص 64)

بدھو کا لفظ تھا فقط اک مصلحت کی بات
دل میں مرے نہاں ہے جو ہے اصلیت کی بات

(گاندھی نامہ، ص 45)

انقلاب آیا نئی دنیا نیا ہنگامہ ہے
شاہ نامہ ہو چکا اب دور گاندھی نامہ ہے

(گاندھی نامہ، ص 1)

یورپ میں گو ہے جنگ کی قوت بڑھی ہوئی
لیکن فزوں ہے اس سے تجارت بڑھی ہوئی
ممکن نہیں لگا سکیں وہ توپ ہر جگہ
دیکھو مگر پیئرس کا ہے سوپ ہر جگہ

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص 63)

اب کہاں دست جنوں تار گریباں اب کہاں
پانیر اور دست مجنوں اور خبر ہے تار کی

لے لیا شیریں نے کمسریٹ میں ٹھیکہ دودھ کا

ریل بنوانے لگے فرہاد اب کہسار کی

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص 68)

پریوں کے عاشقوں کو سودا ہوا مسوں کا

جو پھاڑتے تھے جامہ اب کوٹ سی رہے ہیں

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 15)

میں ہوا ان سے رخصت اے اکبر

وصل کے بعد تھینک یو کہہ کر

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 54)

ہر گام پہ چند آنکھیں نگراں ہر موڑ پہ اک لیسنس طلب

اس پارک میں آخر اے اکبر میں نے تو ٹہلنا چھوڑ دیا

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 94)

راہ میں لیسنس ہی کافی ہے عزت کے لئے

بس یہی لے لیجئے تلوار رہنے دیجئے

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 255)

پوچھتے کیا ہوکہ تو پیرو ہے یا ہر بنس ہے

بندہ جو کچھ ہو بہر حالت بلا لیسنس ہے

(کلیات، جلدسوم، ص، 84)

تہمد میں بٹن جب لگنے لگے جب دھوتی سے پتلون آگا

ہر پیڑ پہ اک پہرہ بیٹھا ہر کھیت میں اک قانون آگا

(کلیات، جلدسوم، ص، 19)

طاعون و تپ و کھٹمل مچھر سب کچھ ہے یہ پیدا کیچڑ سے
بمبے کی روانی ایک طرف اور ساری صفائی ایک طرف

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 12)

کشت دل کو نفع پہنچے اشک ایسی چیز ہے
دیدۂ گریاں پہ واٹر ٹیکس کی تجویز ہے

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص، 85)

یہ موج فیض ہے تہذیب کی یا اس کا طوفاں ہے
کنواں موجود ہے گھر میں تو پھر پانی کا نل کیسا

(کلیات، جلدسوم، ص 13)

قاری کا کنواں بند ہو گیا۔ لال ڈگی کے کنویں ایک دم کھاری ہو گئے۔ خیر کھاری ہی پانی پیتے، گرم پانی نکلتا ہے۔پرسوں میں سوار ہو کر کنوؤں کا حال دریافت کرنے گیا تھا۔۔۔ قصہ مختصر شہر صحرا ہو گیاتھا۔ اب جو کنویں جاتے رہے اور پانی گوہر نایاب ہو گیا، تو یہ صحرا صحرائے کربلا ہو جائے گا۔

(بنام مجروح، 1861، خلیق، دوم،1958، 524)

فرمایا کہ تھوڑا عرصہ ہوا چوک کی دوکانوں میں آگ لگی۔اس وقت پائپ بند ہونے سے رعایا کا سخت نقصان ہوا۔ میں نے مذکورہ شعر اس خیال سے متاثر ہو کر لکھا تھا۔ کیا کہا جائے۔ صاحب کی آب و دانہ پہ حکمرانی ہے اگر اس وقت زمانۂ سابق کی طرح کنویں ہوتے تو آگ بر وقت قابو میں لائی جا سکتی تھی۔ شہروں میں ترمیم دیکھو کہ حکمراں طبقہ اور امرا سول لائن میں ہیں، غربا کے لئے زیست کے دن گذارنے کے واسطے شہر کے گندے گوشے علیحدہ ہیں۔ مراد اس سے یہی ہے کہ امیر و غریب یکجا نہ ہوں گے، نہ ایک دوسرے کے دکھ درد سے ہمدردی ہو گی۔

(بزم آکبر، 3/132)

پائپ کوئی کھلا نہیں گھر میں لگی ہے آگ
اب بھاگنا ضرور ہوا غور کیا کریں

(کلیات، جلد سوم، ص 42)

آب و دانــــه پـــه حکمرانـــی ہـــے

(کلیات، جلد سوم، ص 130)

پانی کا شکر کس منہ سے ادا کروں۔ ایک دریا ہے کوسی، سبحان اللہ اتنا میٹھا پانی کہ پینے والا گمان کرے کہ یہ پھیکا شربت ہے۔ صاف، سبک، گوارا، ہاضم، سریع النفوذ۔

بنام حکیم غلام نجف خاں، 3 فروری 1860، خلیق، دوم،1985، 630

پانی سبحان اللہ۔ شہر سے تین سو قدم پر ایک دریا ہے اور کوسی اس کا نام ہے۔بے شبہ چشمہء آب حیات کی کوئی سوت اس میں ملی ہے۔ خیر اگر یوں بھی ہے تو بھائی آب حیات عمر بڑھاتا ہے لیکن اتنا شیریں کہاں ہوگا۔

(بنام مجروح، فروری 1860،خلیق، دوم، 1985، 517)

پـــانی پینـــا پـــڑا ہـــے پائـــپ کـــا　　　حرف پڑھنا پڑا ہے ٹائپ کا

پیـــٹ چلتـــا ہـــے آنکـــھ آئـــی ہـــے　　　شاہ ایڈ ورڈ کی دہائی ہے

(کلیات،جلداول، ص 239)

کاپی کی سیاہی ذرا اور سیاہ اور رخشندہ ہو اور آخر تک رنگ نہ بدلے۔

(بنام تفتہ، ہفتم ستمبر، 1858، خلیق، اول، 1984، 292)

ہر کاپی دیکھتا رہا ہوں۔ کاپی نگار اور تھا، متوسط جو کاپی میرے پاس لایا کرتا تھا وہ اور تھا۔۔۔ وہ الفاظ غلط جوں کے توں ہیں یعنی کاپی نگار نے نہ بنائے۔

(بنام مجروح، 8 اگست 1861، خلیق، دوم، 1985،521)

نسخہء مطبوعہ میں غلطی کا احتمال جائز نہیں رکھتے۔ کاپی نویس کے جرم میں مصنف بے چارہ ماخوذ ہوتا ہے۔

(8 بنام جنون بریلوی، مئی، 1864، خلیق، چہارم، 1993)

ہـم کـو اپـنے ایلبـم پـر نـاز کـا ہے کیـا محـل
بے حـد ارزاں ہـو گیـا ہے اب تـو فوٹـوآ پ کـا

آپ کے درشـن مـصور کے بھی حصـے مـیں نـہیں
بـس لیـا جاتـا ہـے فوٹـو ہـی سے فوٹـو آپ کـا

(کلیات ،جلدسوم ،ص 20)

کیا عجب ہو گئے مجھ سے مرے دمساز جدا
دور فونو میں گلے سے ہوئی آواز جدا

(کلیات،جلدسوم،ص 20)

امید چشم مروت کہاں رہی باقی
ذریعہ باتوں کا جب صرف ٹیلیفون ہوا

(کلیات،جلدسوم،ص 20)

چیز وہ ہے بنے جو یورپ میں بات وہ ہے جو پانیر میں چھپے

(کلیات، جلددوم،ص، 62)

اپنی گرہ سے کچھ نہ مجھے آپ دیجئے
اخبار میں تو نام مرا چھاپ دیجئے
دیکھو جسے وہ پانیر آفس میں ہے ڈٹا
بہر خدا مجھے بھی کہیں چھاپ دیجئے
چشم جہاں سے حالت اصلی چھپی نہیں
اخبار میں جو چاہیئے وہ چھاپ دیجئے

(کلیات، جلداول، ص 255)

گھر کے خط میں ہے کہ کل ہو گیا چہلم اس کا
پانیر لکھتا ہے بیمار کا حال اچھا ہے

(کلیات، جلداول، ص 68)

ہوائے طوبیٰ ہے اب نہ سر میں نہ موج کوثر ہے اب نظر میں
ہوس اگر ہے تو بس یہی ہے کہ ہم بھی چھپ جائیں پانیر میں

(کلیات، جلداول، ص 226)

مجھے بھی دیجئے اخبار کا ورق کوئی
مگر وہ جس میں دوائوں کا اشتہار نہ ہو

(قدوائی،انتخاب، 153)

آزاد: آج پروفیسر لاک صاحب زبان پاک سنسکرت کی اشرفیت پر لکچر دینے والے ہیں۔ یہ بزرگوار بڑے مقدس اور عالم یگانہ، یکتائے زمانہ، مشہور دیار و امصار ہیں۔ ی جان:لاحول ولا قوۃ، بھئی خدا کی قسم کتنے بھونڈے ہو، کتنا خراب مذاق ہے۔پروفیسر صاحب کے مشہور ہونے کی ایک ہی کہی۔ ہم اتنے بڑے ہوئے آج تک نام بھی سنا ہو تو قسم لیجئے۔کیا دنی خاں سے زیادہ مشہور ہیں؟

(فسانہء آزادجلد اول، ص 15)

بہار: خدا کامیاب کرے۔ لیکن سنیے تو سہی، یہ تو اخبار ہے۔ اس میں خلوے عہدہ اور تنخواہ، اور درخواست کا کیسا جھگڑا؟ اس میں محاربہ کا حال، یا جنگ و جدال، علمی اور پولیٹیکل قیل و قال چاہیئے یا یہ جنجال؟ آزاد: تو قبلہ آپ نے اخبار پڑھا ہی نہیں۔پیر و مرشد، اخبار تو عطر مجموعہ ہے۔لڑکوں کا اتالیق، جوانوں کا ناصح شفیق، بڈھوں کے تجربے کی کسوٹی،رکن رکین سلطنت، تجار کا دوست، صناعوں کا یار غار، رعایا کا وکیل، جمہور انام کا سفیر، مدبروں کا مشیر۔ کسی کالم میں ملکی چھیڑ چھاڑ، کہیں سوشل امور میں تکرار۔ کہیں اشعار آبدار، کہیں نوٹس اور اشتہار۔انگریزی اخباروں میں طرح طرح کی باتیں درج ہوتی ہیں، اور دیسی اخبار بھی ان کا تتبع کرتے ہیں۔

(''فسانہء آزاد'' ، اول، ص 163)

ایک ایک بادہء خود پرستی میں محو و سرشار ہے۔ کونسل اور کمیٹی اور اخبار موجود ہے۔ پھر آپس میں محبت بڑھانے، بھائی چارہ کرنے کی کیا ضرورت ہے۔

(رقعات اکبر، ص 126)

مال گاڑی پہ بھروسا ہے جنھیں اے اکبر
ان کو کیا غم ہے گناہوں کی گراں باری کا

(کلیات، جلدسوم،ص 8)

تنہائی و طاعت کا یہ دور ہے اب دشمن
پیڑوں پہ نہ وہ طائر صحرا پہ نہ وہ جوبن
جنگل کے جو تھے سائیں وہ ریل کے ہیں پائیں
املی کی جگہ سگنل قمری کی جگہ انجن

(کلیات، جلددوم،ص 56)

ابھی اس راہ سے کوئی گیا ہے　　　　کہے دیتی ہے شوخی نقش پا کی

(میر حسین تسکین دہلوی)

ابھی انجن گیا ہے اس طرف سے　　　　کہے دیتی ہے تاریکی ہوا کی

(کلیات ، جلداول،ص 251)

سنتے نہیں ہیں شیخ نئی روشنی کی بات
انجن کی ان کے کان میں اب بھاپ دیجئے

(کلیات، جلداول،ص 254)

آگے انجن کے دین ہے کیا چیز　　　　بھینس کے آگے بین ہے کیا چیز

(کلیات، جلداول،ص 243)

اس کا پسیجنا ہے اور اس کے ہیں بھپارے　　یورپ نے ایشیا کو انجن پہ رکھ لیا ہے

(کلیات ،جلدسوم، ص 104)

مشینوں نے کیا نیکوں کو رخصت　　کبوتر اڑ گئے انجن کی پیں سے

(کلیات، جلددوم،ص 46)

خضر کی حاجت نہیں ہم کو جہاں تک ریل ہے

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص 98)

میں اقبال صاحب کی قدر اس سبب سے نہیں کرتا کہ دربار لندن میں وہ مقبول ہیں۔

طالب ہوں میں تو اپنے ہی دل کی نگاہ کا
سودا نہیں ہے مجھ کو حریفوں کی واہ کا

(رقعات، 115-116)

زمانے کا رنگ آپ دیکھ رہے ہیں۔ جھوٹی عزت اور نقصان رساں لذتوں کا شوق طبیعتوں پر غالب ہے۔ نام ہے ملکی ترقی کا لیکن کوشش ان باتوں کی ہو رہی ہے جن سے سوسائٹی ٹکڑے ٹکڑے ہو جائے۔

(رقعات، 119)

یہ نظمیں انقلاب روکنے کے لئے نہیں ہیں، یادگار انقلاب ہیں۔ حصہ دوم میں یہ شعر پائیے گا۔

نظم اکبر کو سمجھ لو یادگار انقلاب
یہ اسے معلوم ہے ٹلتی نہیں ہے آئی ہوئی

(رقعات، 36-37)

کہا منصور نے خدا ہوں میں
ڈارون بولے بوزنا ہوں میں
ہنس کے کہنے لگے مرے اک دوست
فکر ہر کس بقدر ہمت اوست

(کلیات، جلدسوم، ص ص 140-141)

تو و طوبی و ما و قامت یار
فکر ہر کس بقدر ہمت اوست

حافظ،دیوان، 727

اگر ڈارون کی یہ تھیوری درست ہے کہ انسان بندر سے پیدا ہوا ہے تو اس منزل تمدن پر اہل یورپ کو انسانیت کے بہت سے اعلی محاسن کا حامل ہونا چاہیئے تھا۔ مگر ایسا نہیں۔ اس پر افسوس کرتا ہوں۔

یا الٰہی یہ کیسے بندر ہیں
ارتقا پر بھی آدمی نہ ہوئے

(بزم اکبر، 165)

جو گذرو گے ادھر سے میرا اجڑا گاؤں دیکھو گے
شکستہ ایک مسجد ہے بغل میں گورا بارک ہے

(کلیات، جلددوم، ص 148)

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